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WHEN CAREY CAME TO TOWN

EDITH BARNARD DELANO

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It was dusk, and the spring of the year, and his love was beside him (Page 277)

WHEN CAREY CAME TO TOWN

BY

EDITH BARNARD DELANO

Author of "The Land of Content,"
"Rags," etc.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY W. B. KING

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TO

NINA GOODWIN CARTER

ILLUSTRATIONS

It was dusk, and the spring of the year, and his love was beside him. (Page 277.) *Frontispiece*

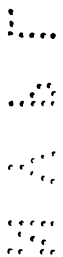
FACING PAGE

"He asked where I was going, and I drew myself up very haughtily, and said, 'Sir, my friends are my own!'" . . . 36

"I wouldn't touch his food if I was starving —not when it's given to me that way!" 188

Bending over a sleeping baby on her lap, was Carey. 222

O GENTLE READER! Can you picture to yourself a broad ribbon of street, strung at its lowest end with shops and factories, rising from the work-world to a stretch of little houses that nudge and elbow one another in a friendly way; can you see how, as the road winds upward, the houses become larger and less neighbourly; can you see them take on a patrician reserve in the seclusion of their lawns and gardens; and can you see the great stone mansion that tops the hill like a crown, a crown wrought by the forge that is the City? . . . Look more closely; see how dark are the windows in the smaller homes! Only here and there a light—perhaps where a mother watches a sick child, perhaps where the Angel of Life is knocking at the door, perhaps where the Angel of Death is waiting for dawn and the ebb-tide. Yes, those larger sheets of light are in the larger houses, and in one of those every window gleams; these little lights, some red, some white, mark where the motor-cars wait for the dancers . . . What? You wonder at the vague dimness of the street-lights that go in pairs, stepping a converging measure as they dance up-hill? You wonder? Bend nearer to your picture, look more closely! See those feathery snow-flakes! Watch them falling, falling! Mark, if you can, where they come to rest, as silent as sunlight, more quiet than shadow! You are right; there is a veil over everything! . . . Stand back, now, and look at the whole of your picture! Do you not see the unbroken purity of the lawn and road? Do you not see the black traceries of the arching elms, marked above by those delicate pencilings of white? How hushed is the world before this miracle of beauty! Is it awaiting one miracle more?



SCOTT, the butler, had made himself comfortable in front of the library fire. Scott preferred the library at all times, but most especially on those evenings when his wife was in the kitchen, having "stopped by" on her way home from prayer-meeting. Mrs. Scott held a high place in her husband's esteem, but she had a wearying fondness for repeating as much as she could remember of the sermon.

Scott would not have presumed to sit in the library or any other room of his former employer, that well-known ornament of the House of Lords; but while he—quite fashionably—condescended to the using of American dollars, he retained a good, sound British scorn for all else that is not English; for all, that is to say, except Mr. Ward and Mr. Williamson. Even an English butler must respect Hiram A.; even an English butler must adore the genial Robert.

He was awaiting the return of the two, and he knew to a minute when to expect them, just

as he knew what Mr. Ward's mood would be after a day passed in conferences with the mill operatives who were threatening to strike, and followed by a dinner at Mrs. Mason's, an estimable lady whose four daughters remained on the parental hearth, unsought and none too ornamental. Scott knew precisely what degree of anxiety Mrs. Mason had worried along to; he measured it by Mr. Ward's reluctance to accept her frequent invitations. In fact, there was very little that Scott did not know about Hiram A. Ward, from the origin of the family fortune to the names of the men who hated him and the women who—to quote the butler's eloquent phrase—were "setting their caps at the master."

He knew, for example, that Mr. Ward was the fourth of his name to live and labour in the town of Hilton; he knew that Mr. Ward's great-grandfather had carried a dinner-pail and tended a loom for many long hours of many long days in the mill that was now one of the bulwarks of the family fortune. He knew that this wealth was three generations

old, and that the family passion for the beautiful had only begun with Hiram A.'s father; just as he knew that his master's house was the largest and finest in the State, and filled to overflowing with objects of beauty whose amassing brought forth periodical columns of protest in the European newspapers. He knew—far better than the men who hated him—just how harsh and crabbed and unrelenting, how stingy and greedy and selfish was Hiram A. Ward.

"The master's as 'ard as a nutcracker, that's w'at 'e is," Scott frequently remarked to the wife of his bosom; but he said it with more than a touch of pride and appreciation; for, while he knew all those unpleasant things about "the master," he also knew just how kind he could be, how secretly generous; and he knew—however unsuspected it was by the rest of the world—how shy was Hiram A. Ward, for all his frowns and his crabbedness and his ruthless shoving aside of those weaker than himself. He knew the softest spot in the master's heart, too—if so robust a person as

young Mr. Williamson might be called a "spot."

Mr. Robert Atwater Williamson was an extraordinarily handsome young man, as different from his employer as any male human creature can be different from another. Frail and homely to the end of his days, Mr. Ward had been a delicate child, and in school and college the sports he longed for had been denied him. Williamson always wondered why it was that "old Hiram" had offered him, in the first place, the desirable position of personal secretary. For all his huge size and his dozens of trophies, and ways that made friends for him everywhere, he was a simple-hearted youth, not given to exalted opinions of himself; and the position of private secretary to a man of Hiram A. Ward's eminence in the business world was one to be desired and sought by older and wiser and more experienced men than any chap just graduated. He knew he was all untrained and unworthy; but he was fearless, and he ended by accepting the position as a heaven-sent fall of manna, never

suspecting that it was just his big, healthy boyishness, his brimming energy and good nature that more than all else attracted the keen eye of the reigning lord of the Ward dynasty. But Hiram A. had watched young Williamson, the undergraduate; he had watched him lose and watched him win. He seldom had reason to doubt his own judgment of men, and the five years that had passed since Williamson had become a member of his household had welded the business relationship into a warm and solid friendship.

So it was for these two—employer and employée, yet firm friends—that Scott the butler waited; and at twenty minutes of twelve he arose from his comfortable chair and set it in position at the left of the hearth. At nineteen minutes of twelve he opened the bronze door that gave access to the palace of the Wards, and stood beside it like the graven image of propriety that he was.

Although the distance from the limousine to the vestibule was so short, the two men brought flakes of snow into the house on their

hats and shoulders. Scott, the unfailing, took his master's long, fur-lined coat; Williamson got out of his unassisted. Then Scott said:

"'K you!" and disappeared into the regions back of the dining-room, and the others turned into the fire-lit library.

It was a beautiful room, as beautiful as the heart of a sea-shell or the glint on the plumage of a peacock. Williamson never entered it without an indrawn breath of pleasure; but to-night Mr. Ward only raised his eyes to glance at the writing-table that was lighted by a large lamp of shell and silver. Then he kicked a chair into position before the fire-place, kicked a log into place, kicked the fender, frowned because there seemed nothing else to kick, and thumped himself down into the chair. He had a lighted cigar between his lips.

Scott brought in a coffee-tray, which he set on a small table at Mr. Ward's side. He stood, a model of respectful servility, until Mr. Ward grunted,

"Well?"

Then he asked, "H'anythink else, sir?"

"Been any messages?" Mr. Ward mumbled past the cigar.

"One from the superintendent, sir, saying the men was to hold a meeting to-night, sir. And a note, sir." Whereupon Scott lifted a little grinning jade image from the desk, took from beneath it a small envelope with the narrowest of black borders, laid the note on a card-tray of shell and silver, and presented it to his master.

Mr. Ward almost smiled; he was about to open the envelope, but caught the quizzical look of his secretary upon him, frowned again, and thrust the missive into his pocket. Then once more he growled over his shoulder at Scott,

"Well?"

"H'anything to h'eat, sir?"

"What do you say, Williamson?" asked Mr. Ward.

The younger man left the table on which he had been perching, crossed the rug to the fireplace, and turned his back to the blaze. Then,

by way of answering Mr. Ward's question, he began poking his throat, first on one side, then on the other, with his forefinger. The others watched him, apparently fascinated.

"What on earth are you doing that for?" Mr. Ward at last demanded. "What's the matter with you?"

"Do you know," said Mr. Williamson pensively, "I believe I'm going to have tonsillitis again! I've got shivers down my back, and my head aches like to-morrow morning, and—" he poked his throat again and screwed up his face—"and—that hurts!"

"I should think it would," said Mr. Ward unfeelingly. "You'd better go to bed."

"I think I will," Williamson agreed. "There's nothing else to-night, is there? It's a quarter of twelve now."

"Begging your pardon, sir," murmured Scott, "if I might suggest a little belladonna, sir! Mrs. Scott, having had experience with her grace, the Duchess of Bueford, sir, always recommends a little belladonna at the beginning, sir!"

"Oh, go to bed!" Mr. Ward snapped out.

Mr. Williamson ignored him. "Thanks, Scott," he said to the butler, with one of the smiles that made everybody love him. "Don't you think a good, long, hot drink would do just about as well?"

"Well, sir," Scott began dubiously, only to be interrupted again by Mr. Ward.

"*Will* you go to bed?" he growled. "No wonder you get sore throats. You talk yourself hoarse."

Williamson grinned down at him. "Yes, Hiram, I'll go to bed," he said. "Your anxiety on my behalf is touching. It's irresistible. If I don't appear in the morning, you won't worry too much, will you?"

Mr. Ward grasped the arms of his chair and leaned forward as if in an effort to rise; whereupon his secretary left the hearth-rug and strode to the door. In the hall he turned, however, and flapped a large, muscular hand in a gesture of forewell.

"Night-night, Hiram," he said.

"Oh, *go* to bed," Mr. Ward replied, reluct-

antly grinning back at him; and Williamson departed, laughing. But he called down from the stairway,

"But say, I *am* going to have tonsillitis again! You won't let yourself worry too much about me, will you, Hiram?"

Scott was still standing beside his master's chair. "Begging your pardon, sir," he suggested, "you have not yet said whether you wished anything to h'eat, sir."

"What have you got?" asked Mr. Ward.

But the answer to that simple question was long delayed. There was the sound of a vehicle having stopped before the house, of the slamming of a carriage door, and of a woman's laugh; then the knocker, which was a part of the ornamental bronze vestibule door, fell twice.

Mr. Ward looked up at the clock, which marked a few minutes before midnight, and Scott went into the hall, disapproval in every step.

"Confound that fool Harrison!" Mr. Ward began. "Hasn't sense enough to wait until

morning to report that strikers' meet—" but his sentence stopped in the middle.

Scott evidently had opened the door suddenly, and as evidently the person outside had not expected it to open quite so soon. A softly drawling voice was saying, apparently to the driver of the vehicle,

"Oh, I reckon it's all right!"

And the voice was the voice of a woman; unless Mr. Ward's experienced ears deceived him, of a young woman. He jumped to his feet and turned just in time to see her offering her hand to Scott.

"How do you do?" she asked the butler demurely, with the smile of a child who is sure of its welcome. "I am Miss Wethersbee, you know!"

Scott was motionless, but his expression of horror showed that he saw the little hand outstretched to him; he stood open-eyed, staring, speechless. If Hiram A. Ward was capable, at the moment, of any feeling at all beyond incredulous surprise, it was for one of sympathy for Scott. Mr. Ward was also

motionless, speechless, amazed; and small wonder!

The electric globe in the vestibule had been turned off by the careful butler when he shut the door after Williamson; now the only light was that from the hall. Against the dark background of the outer door a remarkable figure stood out as if painted in colors a trifle over-brilliant. It was the figure of a woman, but of a woman of a by-gone day. The hoop-skirted dress she wore, the enveloping mantel that was slipping away from her shoulders—it was a heavy shawl of the variety known to our grandmothers as "paisley"—the black mittens on her hands, the hair brooch at her throat—all were of the fashion of ante-bellum days. Hiram A. was instantly reminded of a faded daguerreotype of his grandmother which was lying somewhere about the house. He supposed the girl was dressed for some masquerade dance—the footless things were all the rage this winter. He couldn't see why she had come to the wrong house—a most disgusting and irritating mistake—and at this hour of the night, too!

He was about to go forward and deliver himself of a remark to that effect when she saw him standing in the library, and ran forward.

"Close the door, will you, please?" she said over her shoulder to the frozen image who had once served a noble lord.

"Yes! Shut—that—door!" Mr. Ward echoed, with a snap. What tomfoolery was this, anyway? And didn't Scott know as well as anybody that neighbours' houses have eyes and ears? This midnight visit would be discussed at every breakfast-table in the street—and he supposed the newspapers would have it by night! So again Mr. Ward shouted, although Scott had already jumped at his first command,

"*Shut* that door!"

But the girl was standing in front of the irate master of the house, looking up at him with the friendliest little smile in the world.

"Oh, how do you do?" she said again; and as Hiram A. frowned down at her she held out both of her hands to him. Involuntarily Mr.

Ward took them in his—but gingerly, as if they were—well, raw oysters or a baby!

But it was evident that the girl saw nothing strange in his behaviour. Her lips parted again over the whitest of small teeth. "Oh, I am so glad to be here at last!" she said. "I didn't know trains could go so far!"

Then, as if suddenly realising the need of further explanation, "I've come to make you a visit!" she added.

READER, have you never come in from the frosty darkness of a winter's eve to a warm room where the fire-glow danced on the ceiling and a lamp shed a welcoming circle of light? Have you never met, in a crowd, an eye which flashed to your own an unexpected message of understanding? Have you never caught, through a tangle of pine, the blue gleam of a summer sea? Has there never been blown to you, as you passed, the fragrance of some hidden flower? O Reader, has not some unforeseen beauty been suddenly revealed to you, where you would least have looked for it, to startle you, at first, into incredulity, to thrill you, anon, with wonder at its perfection?

MR. WARD dropped her hands as if suddenly they burned, and the girl went past him into the library. She looked at the walls lined with books, at the glowing Van Dyke over the mantelpiece, the massive reading-lamp of silver and shell, the jade-littered writing-table; her eyes grew big with wonder, and her lips formed a round, expressive,

"O-o-oh!"

Mr. Ward's eyes met Scott's; and that personage, with an expression a little wild, shook his head, tapped his brow with an expressive forefinger, nodded questioningly toward the library and then toward the front door, and made a slight gesture as of tossing something away.

"Nonsense!" snapped Mr. Ward, with a frown; but as he turned toward the girl he said, in a tone and manner of the man who is not accustomed to having his word disputed,

"My dear madam, I am afraid you have made a mistake."

The girl looked up at him, and from a child-like friendliness her expression became wistful.

"Have I?" she asked. "Well, it doesn't really matter. I told the driver to take me to the biggest house because I thought there'd surely be plenty of room in that one. But"—with another look around the beautiful library, and once more smiling up at Mr. Ward—"but this will do perfectly well."

Scott opened his mouth—and shut it again. Mr. Ward's face became darkly red. He was conscious of a curious, prickling sensation behind his ears. He started once or twice to speak before he could actually articulate. He even swallowed, as if something were choking him.

At last he managed to say, "It's a new one on me. I'll admit that. But it won't go."

The girl still looked up at him; shadows of weariness were deepening on her face, which was even more pale than when she came in. He might have been speaking an ancient language for all she seemed to understand.

"I have been the object of many and varied

endeavours before this," said Mr. Ward, "but I repeat, yours is a new one on me. I'll give you credit for that. But it won't go. I tell you, it won't *go!* You will kindly"—he bowed ironically, mockingly—"depart!"

He could read, as if they were written there in words, the changing expressions on the girl's face—surprise and understanding, fright, then the look of a wounded child. She pressed her hands against her breast in a gesture that was to become familiar to him. Her lips parted; she drew a quick little gasping breath.

"Oh!" she said, and again, "O-o-o-oh!"

Still she was looking at him, but still he returned the look with one of half-sneering amusement. Then she whispered—

"Why—don't you *wa-ant* me?"

Hiram A. could be cruel; and he knew well enough that nothing stings worse than contempt. He drew down the corners of his mouth in the smile—if such it could be called—that had caused many a man to long to throttle him; he raised his eyebrows, and slowly shook his head at the girl. The motion and look

conveyed the fact that he most assuredly did not want her, that he would not so much as waste a word upon her.

She stared up at him—it may have been in a sort of fascinated horror. But Scott, the butler, stepped forward from the shadow.

"If you please, sir," he began; and Mr. Ward interrupted, as if sure of what Scott had been going to say.

"Yes, open the door," he commanded.

But Scott only bowed. "If you please, sir," he began again, "I—if I may be allowed to suggest, sir—I think the—er—young lady, sir, is a—a young lady."

"What?"

"Yes, sir," said Scott, with another deferential bend. "I think there's no doubt about it, sir."

The girl swayed, gasped, pressed her hands to her cheeks, and gave a strange little moan.

But Mr. Ward and Scott were gazing at each other over her head—not, for the moment, master and man, but in the presence of the feminine enigma only fellow-men, leagued in

a common cause, taking counsel together, facing a situation whose difficulty affected the interests of both.

"The deuce you do," said Hiram A.; to which Scott replied with the firmness of conviction,

"Yes, sir. I think there's no doubt of it, sir."

Then suddenly, bringing them sharply back from the realms of mere intellectual speculation, the girl between them swayed, reeled, would have fallen had not Scott jumped forward in time to place a chair back of her.

"I'm so *hungry!*" she cried; and, covering her face with her hands, began to cry—not silently, like a woman, but frankly and noisily, like a child.

"Good lord!" said Hiram A.; but Scott had already begun to fill one of the cups from the coffee-machine on the tray. When he had given it to the girl, putting it into her hands as if she were a baby, she began to talk, between sips of the burning fluid and little gasping breaths.

"I—d-don't—know—when I've had anything to—eat! I didn't—know the—train—would keep on going and—going all day. So I—didn't put anything—in my pocket—you see!"

Scott abruptly disappeared; until he returned Mr. Ward stood silent, frowning, watching the girl and listening to her broken sentences. It was the first time in his career that a situation found him unprepared; but he was not thinking of that.

"I thought—the train—would go so fast that I'd—get here in time for dinner. But it—didn't. It just kept on and on—and on. The man that looked at the ticket was not very nice, either," she sobbed. "I asked him please to be sure and t-tell me when we got to the place on my ticket; and the second time—I asked him he said he w-wouldn't have to t-tell me, b-cause I'd ask him every time the train stopped, anyway. And I w-wanted to *k-kill* him!"

At that there came a gleam of appreciative amusement into Mr. Ward's eyes, but he did

not smile. For the first time he was beginning to have some faith in Scott's diagnosis; and when that individual came in with a laden tray he helped him clear a place for it on the writing-table; he even carried a plate to the girl. But at the sight of food she sank back in her chair again, half fainting.

"Why, she's starving!" Hiram A. exclaimed. And he added, with a ferociousness which was not at all deceptive, "Here—drink this coffee —and—eat—for Heaven's sake, eat!"

Then Mr. Ward and Scott returned again to the curious relationship of a few minutes before—and simply as two strong men they watched a starving woman eat. Ward would have expected her—this curiously naïve creature—to eat with childlike greediness; but she did not. Instead, there was a dainty restraint even about the bites she took; decidedly it was rather interesting to watch her. He had always thought that Frenchwomen ate more charmingly than any others; he had often been fascinated in waching the way they curled their fingers about a glass, for instance. Now

this remarkable child-woman in her fancy dress . . .

But suddenly, brutally, a clangour arose which startled the three in the library. Someone was battling upon the front door with some hard instrument, then hammering with the bronze knocker, then kicking and calling.

Scott fairly jumped. He sprang to the door and flung it open, decorum lost in haste.

A burley form in a top hat of ancient vintage, a whip in its hand and snow upon its shoulders—to say nothing of unrepeatable words upon its lips—pushed past Scott, and strode into the hall.

"I want ter know how much longer y'expect me to set out there! Somebody tell me that, will yer? What kind er game's this, anyway? Young lady come off'n the 'leven-twenty-three all diked out in a fancy-dress, lookin' like she's got up for the firemen's ball. Tells me to drive her to the biggest house in town, tells me the gentleman'll pay me, tells me to wait. An' there I been waitin', tell I falls asleep on me box. Like to a-turned me to a frozen image,

it has, in this yere blizzard. An' that *would* be a nice way for a poor man as has to work hard for a livin' to be sent home to his wife and chil'en, wouldn't it—a frozen corpse ready f'r his coffin? I want to know how much longer I'm to wait for this yere ball to be over? An' who's to pay me? That's what I want to know? Who's to pay me, an' where's the money?"

Mr. Ward glared at the intruder, then at the girl. But before he could speak she had risen, and was offering a quickly refilled coffee-cup and a partridge sandwich to the cabman.

"Oh, I'm so sorry!" she said, looking into the large red face as sweetly as she had looked at Mr. Ward himself—a detail which did not escape Hiram. "I'm so dreadfully sorry! Poor man! I cert'n'y do hope you won't catch cold. Here—just you drink this nice hot coffee and eat this sandwich—please do!"

The cabman's expression relaxed into a smile, and Mr. Ward grimly watched the prompt disappearance of his food and drink—his, Hiram A. Ward's. The girl pressed more upon the cabby, chatting meanwhile, cooingly

hoping that he would not take cold, asking the names of his children and inquiring for the health of his wife.

Mr. Ward watched, and listened. Scott watched and listened, too.

But at last Hiram A. recovered. It may be said that he quite fully recovered. He returned to his original manner. He frowned, and his voice was rasping.

"Look here," he said to the girl. "What do you think this is—a free lunch? And what do you mean by not paying this man? I suppose he's an accomplice! If you are, my man, you can take yourself and this—this baggage out of my house, and quickly, too. The game's worked out."

Immediately the belligerency of the cabman returned, and his face got redder than ever; but the girl was the first to speak.

"How could I possibly pay him," she asked, with just a touch of exasperation in her voice and manner, "when I spent all the money for the ticket? How could I——"

Mr. Ward thumped his fist on the table.

"Ticket, ticket! Ticket-ticket-ticket! The woman's a lunatic! Here, you—you take this woman out of my house, and *now,* d'you hear?"

"Will I?" said the cabman—and in no doubtful tone. He came closer to Mr. Ward, too, and poked out his chin—"Will I? An' where'd I get my money from then, hey? See here, miss, I don't want no more o' yer soft soap, I don't. I been settin' out there in this blizzard long enough, an' I want me pay, an' I ain't goin' out without it, neither, an' don't you forget it! I want my pay, an' I want it quick, else they'll be trouble. See?"

Mr. Ward was speechless, perhaps from rage; but Scott stepped forward, once more his imperturbable, calm self. "Beggin' your pardon, sir," he said, with a slight bend toward his master, "if I may be allowed to suggest, sir, perhaps it might be as well to pay the party, sir——"

Mr. Ward threw up his hands and walked off toward the windows; whereupon Scott produced a roll of bills from his trousers pocket—a roll, by the way, far larger than Mr. Ward

ever carried—gave the still blustering hackman something which turned his threats to blessings, ushered him out to the vestibule and closed the door behind his departing form.

Then Scott returned to the library. Mr. Ward was in a far corner, standing with his fists in his pockets, his back to the room. The girl's hands were pressed against her bosom, and although Scott did not, apparently, look at her, he was perfectly aware of the tears in her eyes. That may have been the reason why not even he could think of anything to say. It was the girl herself who broke the tension of the moment; and she broke it by sinking into the big chair, putting her head down upon its arm, and beginning to sob—to sob quite audibly.

Mr. Ward jumped around, and strode back towards the hearth.

"Don't—do—that!" he cried. "What are you doing that for?"

"I—c-can't—help it," the girl sobbed. "I'm so tired, and it isn't a little teeny bit like I expected, and I—I wish—I—hadn't come!"

"Well, what *did* you come for?" Mr. Ward demanded, unfeelingly.

She looked up—and he had a confusing vision of reproachful eyes brimming with tears.

"Why," she said, "I came—t-to—make you —a visit!"

Again Mr. Ward threw his hands upward in a gesture of helplessness.

"And you d-don't act—as if—you—wanted me!"

Again her head was down on the arm of the chair. The absurd bonnet with its dangling veil had slipped off, and Mr. Ward noticed that her hair, black, with odd little reddish gleams through it, was held in place by a tall comb of carved shell. It flashed into his mind that she had been very careful of all the details of her fancy costume; that, and a certain little white space just below where the hair began to ripple upward, distracted his thoughts for the moment; but the girl was talking, explaining, between the gasping breaths of her sobbing.

"I have never been anywhere in all my life,

n-not in all my whole life. And I d-did so want to go on a—visit! Aunt Bella and Aunt Crishy u-used to go visiting all the t-time when they were young. And I have never b-been—anywhere! They used to g-go away for m-months at a time, and they used t-to go to b-balls, and all the gentlemen were in l-love with them, and——"

In spite of himself Mr. Ward was listening now.

"Who is Aunt Tishy?" he asked.

"Not Tishy! Crishy—Lucretia, of course."

"And Aunt Crishy let you come off alone—er—visiting?"

The girl glanced up for an instant. "N-no! Of course not! She never let me go anywhere, not anywhere at all! N-not until she d-died. Then she—couldn't help it."

Even Scott was startled. Plainly, the girl was a monster.

"So as soon as your aunt died you—er—skipped?" Mr. Ward asked.

"Of course not!" the girl said again, sitting up straight enough now, and rubbing her eyes

with her fingers. "I haven't skipped since I was a teeny weeny little girl. And she wasn't my aunt. She was grandfather's aunt. And she's been hoping to die ever since I can remember. She was ninety-nine, and she hadn't really been happy since her lover died."

"Ah!" said Mr. Ward, feeling dazed.

"She was always saying that everybody had died but her. She didn't seem to think about me! The only way I could make her more happy was to get her to tell me how she and Aunt Bella used to visit, and go to balls, and have lovers and serenades and things. I loved to hear about that, because there weren't any lovers in my day. Not a single one. There were only Aunt Crishy upstairs in bed, and Unc' Nathan and Aunt Judy and Jezebel and Lame Ben. There ought to have been ever so many more negrers, but they all ran away with the damyanks, and Millwood is so far from every place else that they never came back again. And nobody visits any more; anyway, nobody ever visited us. Not until Mr. Mink came. And I didn't like Mr. Mink."

"My dear young lady," said Hiram A., interested in spite of himself, "am I to understand that you have passed your life on a plantation so far from neighbours that you never saw any, that you lived there entirely alone except for a remarkably aged aunt and a few black servants?"

She nodded. "That's just what I've been telling you, isn't it?"

"But—but surely there were friends—teachers—some one besides?"

"Oh, I didn't need any teachers. Aunt Bella taught me as long as she lived—I can do a number of things!" She said it with an air of pride. "And I can play 'Lorena' and 'Mountain Waves' and 'Highland Chimes.' And Aunt Crishy taught me how to tat. And I've known how to read ever since I was born, I reckon, so you see I didn't need teachers." Then, apparently as an after-thought, she added, "Of course, I *should* like to have had a dancing-master."

"Good lord!" said Hiram A.

She looked up with shocked eyes. "Oh! *Oh!*

Aunt Crishy said they did, but I wouldn't believe her."

Mr. Ward was too bewildered to speak, and the girl nodded and went on. "She said all gentlemen talked like that, when I told her that Mr. Mink did. Fortunately he didn't come very often. He came when Aunt Crishy died, though, and I reckon he meant to be real nice and kind. He said he would have to find a home for me with gentlefolks, and that it was a—a—outrage that I'd been brought up so. I didn't think that was a very nice way for him to talk, so I told him he need not put himself to any trouble for me, because I had already arranged to go away on a visit."

Still Mr. Ward was beyond questions; but his lips were set in their straightest line.

"That was true, you know, because I had already found the money in Aunt Crishy's writing-desk and made up my mind to spend it for a ticket on the railroad. I had never seen the railroad, but Lame Ben knew where it was."

"And this Mr.—Mr. Mink permitted you to come away on a—a *visit,* to parts unknown?"

She lifted her chin in a way that made Scott think of the Lady Iris, daughter of his former master, the noble lord.

"Mr. Mink had nothing to do with it," she said. "He—he was rather—impertinent, I thought. He asked me where I was going, and I drew myself up very haughtily, and said, 'Sir, my friends are my own!' Just like that."

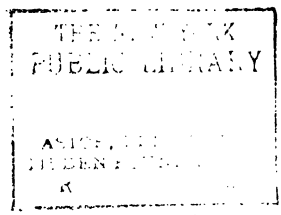
She gave a dramatic imitation of her manner towards Mr. Mink, and seemed to be proud of it; but Mr. Ward frowned.

"Now what on earth did you say that for?" he demanded.

"Because that was what Aunt Crishy said, when she quarreled with her lover. He told her, one day, that he wished she would not speak to Mr. Semmes any more, and Aunt Crishy drew herself up and said, 'Sir, my friends are my own!' Just like that. So her lover rode away in anger, and never came back any more, because he was killed that very day by a fall from his horse."

"But you didn't want Mr.—Mr. Mink to be killed by a fall from his horse, did you?"

"He asked where I was going, and I drew myself up very haughtily, and said, 'Sir, my friends are my own!'"



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"I shouldn't have minded. But I only said it because I had just longed to say it to someone, ever since Aunt Crishy told me about her last scene with her lover."

Mr. Ward's mouth was drawn downward at the corners; his intimates knew that indicated amusement. "I see," he said. "And when you had—er—silenced Mr. Mink's objections, what did you do?"

"I sewed. I made three new dresses out of some of the things in the attic. And then I packed my things in Aunt Bella's trunk. And then I had to wait 'til Unc' Nathan's mule felt well enough to make the journey to the Springs. And then I bought the ticket, and came. Going visiting is all perfectly simple, you see, when you once make up your mind."

"Hum!" said Hiram. "How did you come to choose Hilton, and my house, for your—er—visit?"

"I didn't. I put my money on the little shelf in the railroad's house, and told the man to give me a ticket for that much money. I kept out the biggest money, because it was so pretty.

The man started to ask me some questions, but I looked at him the way I looked at Mr. Mink, and he seemed to change his mind. Then the train came, and I got on, and—and that's all."

"You forget the cabman," Hiram remarked.

"Oh yes—poor man! I do hope he *didn't* take cold, don't you? I should have forgotten all about Aunt Bella's trunk, if he hadn't reminded me."

"But what in heaven's name made you choose *my* house——" Mr. Ward began; a discreet cough from Scott stopped him, and he actually flushed a little. Yet the flush was not because he had been reproved by his butler.

The girl, however, had not caught the thought beneath his question. "Oh, I knew there would always be room for one more in a big house. There *is,* isn't there?" she added, her face again becoming wistful.

But Mr. Ward did not reply. He did not smile. Instead, he stood looking down into her eyes, trying to draw from their depths of truthfulness what was not there; and, because it was

not, he drew the only other conclusion that his previous experience in life made possible. The girl was not putting up a game on him; she was honest, and she was what Scott called a lady. She was lovely, also, and she was touching; but—she was insane. He had heard that shocks sometimes unsettled the reason; he had a vague idea that a shock might restore hers.

He squared his shoulders, and looked at her with the frown and the compressed lips which usually set people scuttling to do his bidding.

"Madam," he said, "I do not believe one word of all this nonsense you've been telling me. I do not believe in your Aunt Tishy nor your Mr. Mink nor you; I do not believe one word of all you have said, and I do not propose to allow you to remain in my house one minute longer."

"Oh!" the girl cried, again pressing her hands over her breast, and springing to her feet. "O-oh—o-o-oh!"

"Your story is incredible, absolutely incredible, madam! You came here unasked—you will take yourself off unassisted."

Scott drew a step or two nearer out of the shadows. "If you please, sir," he began.

But the girl had already run forward, until she stood close to Hiram A.

"Oh, please don't!" she besought him, laying one small hand on his arm. "It's—horrible; and—I'm so tired!"

Mr. Ward looked down into the uplifted face framed in the dark curls, down at the little hand that touched him as unconsciously as if it were a child's, and over her head at Scott. He had never felt at such a disadvantage in all his life; and undoubtedly the butler had spoken.

"Well?" he snapped out, glaring at Scott.

But again the girl was the first to speak. "Of course I know a gentleman *couldn't* talk like that in earnest; but—I'm so tired!"

Now he looked at her; undoubtedly her lips were trembling, but still she smiled. "Oh, you can't frighten *me,*" she said. "I know you are kind, inside. And besides, I know all about gentlemen!"

"The deuce you do," said Hiram A., taking

half a step backward, as if to free himself from her touch; but at the same moment Scott said,

"Quite so, sir!"

"Aunt Crishy told me," the girl went on. "A gentleman is always kind, and gentle, and generous. A gentleman is always quick to right a wrong. He is ready and willing to help a lady—a woman, all women. You need never be afraid of anything, not of anything at all, when there is a gentleman near to protect you. . . . We always thought it most unfortunate that there were no gentlemen at Millwood."

"Quite so," Scott murmured again.

Hiram A. felt helpless, enmeshed in an intangible dream-work of unreality. Or, rather, it was a nightmare. He had had nightmares before, horrible moments, in which he found himself scantily clothed in very public places; but this was worse. In this one it was long past midnight, and Scott and a crazy girl were trying to invade his bachelor freedom, trying to make him the laughing-stock of the town, of the world. Then, through his horror, he heard words of still deeper horror.

"If you please, sir," Scott was saying, with a note of unaccustomed firmness in his voice—and Hiram A. vowed that he'd pay Scott out for this when he woke up—"if you please, sir, I think the young lady will have to remain for the night! Yes, sir!"

Mr. Ward was far, far past speech. But the girl herself was saying, as dream-creatures will say, "Of course! Why, I came to stay, you know!"

"Certainly, miss," said Scott; and then, to that other dream-creature who was Hiram's self, yet so wildly not himself, "I think the young lady might have the south bed-room, sir. Mrs. Scott could make up a bed on the couch, sir. Mrs. Scott frequently made up a bed on the couch when her grace, the Duchess of Bueford, was not feeling well. If I may say so, sir, it's quite fortunate that Mrs. Scott stopped by on her way home from prayer-meeting this evening, and is in the kitchen at the moment, sir, waiting for me to take her home under the umbrella, sir. And with Mrs. Scott here, sir, I'm sure nobody could say as how the young

lady was not—er—properly—er—chaperoned, so to say, sir. Her grace, the Duchess of Bueford, used to——"

But at that moment Hiram A. threw his hands above his head and stalked out of the room. He marched up the stairs, coming down very heavily on each unoffending tread; at the landing he paused long enough to say, across the banister,

"Have *ten* Mrs. Scotts if you want to!"

And the girl, looking after him with pain and surprise in her dark eyes, heard the butler murmur,

"'K you!"

O READER, have you ever seen a new day dawn? Have you never watched the first beams of the rising sun kiss to a semblance of roses the blue face of the snow-clad earth, or gild the mountain-tops with its warm midas-touch? Has there never come to you a morning when life seemed at a new dawn, when the glow in your heart illumined your world, glorified it, set you trembling at its promised splendour? Whence comes the sun? Whence came the light in your heart? Was it, perchance, kindled by a magic spark from the blind eyes of Love?

THERE were certain inherited tenets of the Ward family to which Hiram A. clung with the obstinacy that was one of the strong pillars of the Ward fortune. Among them was early rising; and when Mr. Robert Atwater Williamson came down stairs at half-past nine on the morning after the great snow-storm, he had somewhat the feeling of its being afternoon. But he also felt very much neglected; for no one had answered his bell, his neck was stiff, and he was ferociously hungry. Therefore, he had reluctantly arisen, dressed himself, and set forth in search of nourishment. Step by step, very cautiously, caressing his neck with one hand lest he forget, he came down to the hall. Never before had Scott failed to hear descending footsteps, never before had Scott not been there with his own irreproachable deference of manner.

"By the Lord Harry!" said Mr. Williamson, looking around the empty hall. "Something must have happened!"

Then he started to cross toward the dining-room; but before he reached its threshold Scott appeared in the pantry door and held up a warning hand.

"Please sir," he whispered, "Mr. Ward is breakfasting in the laundry, sir. This way, Mr. Williamson, if you please! 'K you!"

But Williamson stood perfectly still and looked at Scott. He pressed his hand to his forehead; but surely he was not sufficiently feverish to account for a delirium so wild.

"Say that again, Scott," said he.

Scott began with a deprecating cough; but before he could speak there came the most startling sound they had ever heard in that house. From somewhere beyond the closed door of the dining-room there rang out a laugh, a woman's laugh, a girl's laugh!

Williamson forgot his stiff neck; and when Scott held open the pantry door and looked at him pleadingly he hesitated no longer, but fled in the direction of the laundry.

Mr. Ward sprang to his feet as they entered.

Scott had told the truth. Breakfast was laid on one of the laundry tubs.

"Shut that door," Mr. Ward commanded.

Scott obeyed; Hiram A. and his secretary gazed at each other. Williamson was beyond speech; it was Mr. Ward who found the first word.

"There's a woman upstairs," he said. He jerked his thumb over his shoulder in the direction of the dining-room. "A-a woman,—a girl."

Williamson looked at Scott as if in doubt of Hiram's sanity.

"Quite so, sir," said Scott. "A young lady, sir—and Mrs. Scott."

Williamson turned toward his employer; he was forgetting the pain in his throat.

"Don't stand there like a figure on a tombstone," said Mr. Ward. "And you oughtn't to keep your mouth open like that. Bad for your cold. There's your breakfast. Eat it."

Mr. Williamson pressed his hand to his forehead, poked at his throat, and thumped upon his chest. "I knew it!" he said. "I knew it

last night, but I didn't think it was going to be this bad. You'd better send for somebody to feel my pulse, Hiram, and if it's a case for a trained nurse, please see that it's a blonde."

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Mr. Ward, unfeelingly. "There's nothing the matter with you. Eat your breakfast."

"Here?" Mr. Williamson asked pointing to the laundry tubs.

"Yes, there! Didn't I tell you there was a woman upstairs?"

"Tell me some more," said Williamson, with a grin.

"Well," Mr. Ward asked, "didn't you hear anything last night after you went to bed?"

"I thought I heard a man's voice raised in—er—shall we say—imprecation? But that is not altogether unusual in this house, is it?"

"That was a cabby," Mr. Ward explained, looking hurt and offended. "She drove up here in a station hack, a *hack,* just after you had gone upstairs."

"A cabby? *She?*"

"She *and* a cabby."

"Alone?"

"Alone, except for the cabby."

"Young?"

"Looks like it."

"Pretty?"

"I don't know," snapped Hiram A., turning on his heel.

Williamson sprang to his feet. "Look here, Hiram," he asked, "why are we breakfasting in the laundry?"

But Mr. Ward could not smile. "Bob," he said, "I have had just about as much of a strain as I can stand. Don't add to it, will you? It's an awful situation, really. It isn't a joke."

"It sounds like a dream," said Williamson, grinning again; but when he noticed that neither Mr. Ward nor Scott was smiling he visibly tried to become serious.

"You had not much more than gotten up stairs," said Mr. Ward, ignoring the interruption, "when the girl drove up as I said, in a station hack. Walked in as if she belonged here, and said she had come to make me a visit."

"What! Wh-a-t?"

"Well, that's what she said. A visit. Scott, will you kindly tell Mr. Williamson about it? I think perhaps you can make a clearer story of it than I can."

"Yes, sir, certainly sir," said Scott. "The young lady came in like as if she was quite sure this was the place she was looking for. When I opened the door she called back to the cabby, 'Yes, this will do!' and marched in like she belonged here, sir. She—er—the young lady—er—walked in, sir. She—walked in. Yes, sir!"

For the first time Mr. Ward's eyes showed a gleam of amusement. "Tell it all, Scott. Don't leave anything out," said he.

Scott's face became very red. "Yes, sir!"

He spoke in the reserved tone which he used when he wished to convey, quite respectfully, that his feelings were hurt. "The young lady offered to shake hands with me. But——" he added, with a stiffening at Williamson's chuckle of glee, "I have noticed, on my travels, that customs vary in different places. I have noticed that a person may do a thing in one

place and be polite, and in another be quite—er—shocking, sir! And I am certain that the young lady did not come from,—er—here, sir, nor from—er—New York, sir. I am quite sure that she was speaking the truth, and Mrs. Scott agrees with me. Mrs. Scott has had a great deal of experience with ladies, sir, having been lady's-maid to her grace, the Duchess of Bueford; and she says that the young lady is a young lady, sir, beyond question. What the young lady says is true; and she says she has lived in a place called Virginia, which is situated in—I think she said—Millwood. I think the place must be rather distant and quite sparsely inhabited, for the young lady seems to know very little of the manners and customs of the world—or, if I may say so, sir, of society. Yes, sir."

"Look here, Scott," said Mr. Williamson, "get along to what happened, can't you?"

But it was Mr. Ward who finished the tale. "Scott opened the door and the girl walked in," he said. "Shook hands with Scott, shook hands with me, and started to make herself at home.

That, and her being dressed up as if for a masquerade or a fancy-dress party, in hoop-skirt and sun-bonnet affair and—and—and other things, made me think at first she had lost her way and come to the wrong house. But when I suggested that to her, she said she had not lost her way, but had come to make us a visit; and," pointing to the room overhead, "there she is!"

For a long moment Williamson was speechless. He stared at his employer, and opened his mouth once or twice before he succeeded in saying,

"Hiram, Hiram, are you trying to make me believe that you calmly permitted a strange female to enter your house after midnight and make herself at home in it?"

"A young lady, sir," Scott murmured.

"I didn't permit anything," Mr. Ward snapped out.

"But she's here, in this house, now? A perfectly strange woman who just—walked in?"

"A young lady, sir," said Scott.

Ward was frowning, but he had flushed, too.

"She is here," he admitted. "Up there. Dining-room. With Mrs. Scott. Now what are we going to do about it?"

"'We?'" Williamson repeated. "Count me out of it, Hiram! This seems to be your party. Ra-ther! If it were mine, I'd tell her to get out, and to get out quick."

"Would you?" Mr. Ward asked.

"Or else, now that you're in for it, and considering the feelings of the neighbours and the fun the newspapers will get out of it, I'd pay her price, and give her a bonus to make a neat and noiseless get-away. That's what I'd do."

"Oh, would you?" said Mr. Ward again, with a smile and a slight uplifting of the brows.

"If you please, sir," said Scott, "the young lady is a—is a young lady, sir."

"You're making a refrain of that, Scott," Williamson remarked.

"Well, he's telling the truth, anyway," declared Hiram A.

Again Williamson stared; then he shook his head.

"Look here, Hiram," he said, "I resign. You don't need a secretary. What you want is a guardian."

It was becoming evident that Mr. Ward was nearing the end of his patience; but Williamson ambled on, warming to his subject as its possibilities opened before him. He thrust his hands deep into his pockets; he began to rock backwards and forwards, from heels to toes; he also chuckled.

"Of course it may be only temporary, Hiram. We'll do our best to keep it out of the papers as long as there's any hope of recovery. We'll say this threatened strike has been too much for your nerves, and the doctor insists on temporary seclusion. We'll——"

Then Hiram A. exploded. The Ward temper was always one to be regarded with the respect which is born of fear. "You ape!" he cried. "You grinning fool of a hyena! You chicken-headed guinea-pig! You——"

But the laundry door opened.

"Good morning!" a voice said,—a voice that pleasantly drawled its vowels and neglected its

final consonants. "I thought I heard you talking down here—so I came!"

The three men turned; then Scott discreetly slipped out of the back door.

The picture she made needed no finer frame than the laundry door, no artifice of lighting, to heighten its charm. She wore a quaint gown of silk, a plaid silk of faded lavender and brown, with flowing, sweeping skirts and pointed waist. There was a lavender ribbon across her hair, another on her breast; there, too, was a large oval brooch of braided hair, with a heavy rim of pale gold. Above it her throat rose white and round; it seemed all the whiter for the dark curls that fell over her shoulders—as white, indeed, as the inner petal of a lily.

She paused on the threshold; but it was plain that interest held her there, not shyness. She had no more self-consciousness than a child; and, like a child, she was trusting and unafraid. She smiled; then she moved into the room, and held out her hand to Mr. Ward.

"Good morning," she said again. "I hope you had pleasant dreams."

Williamson's lips parted; it would not be far from true to say that his mouth fell open. But Mr. Ward ignored the girl's friendly hand.

"Hum!" he grunted. "Hum!" Then he asked, in the tone of command that his employées often heard, "Kindly tell me your name!"

He was frowning; but he watched the smile deepen at the corners of her mouth.

"Oh, how funny!" she cried. "Not to know the names of your friends! Why, I'm Carey —Belinda Carey Wethersbee, you know! That's who I am! And you are Mr. Ward. Mrs. Scott told me so!"

"Hum!" grunted Hiram again. "And now you will kindly repeat what you told me last night about—about a gentleman—all gentlemen."

Her eyes opened wider; but obediently she repeated the words as if they were a lesson learned by rote.

"A gentleman is always kind, and gentle, and generous. A gentleman is brave, and honest, and honourable. A gentleman is always ready to right a wrong; he is always willing to help a lady—a woman—all women. You need never be afraid of anything, not of anything in the world, when there is a gentleman near to protect you." She paused; the smile on her face had given way to a look of solemnity, as she repeated the words of her little creed. Now it returned, flashed up again at Hiram A., brought the dimples to her cheeks and the sparkles to her eyes. "But everybody knows that!" she added.

"Thank you," said Mr. Ward, unsmilingly. "Now may I present my friend, who is also—er—a—er—a guest in my house—Mr. Williamson?"

And when the girl turned to hold out her hand to Williamson, Mr. Ward followed Scott's example, and departed. In not more than one minute thereafter the big bronze front door was heard to slam.

GOOD READER, can you remember the clasp of a hand, what it meant, what it told you? A hand to you, a child, in the dark—did it speak reassurance? Your mother's at parting—did it make your heart ache with gentle yearning for goodness? The glad clasp of a friend—did it make your new happiness more sure, more real? A neighbour's, in your sorrow—what comfort did it not bestow, what balm? The touch of a loved one, palm laid on palm—what promise, what thrill of exquisite tenderness! And the grip of a comrade—what a seal of friendship, what a gift of courage, what a staff and compass for life's journey! Do you recall such a clasp of the hand, good reader?

IT WAS the custom of Hiram A. Ward to be in his small and dingy office at the mill not later than eight o'clock, to leave when the whistles blew for noon, to return at one, and to be the last person out, except the watchman, when the great iron gates of the yard swung together at night. Occasionally he broke the monotony by attending a meeting of directors somewhere else; but it was family tradition with the Wards to spend long hours in their beloved mill, where the noise of the shuttles was as music in their ears; and whenever Hiram A. was in Hilton he manfully upheld the tradition.

Great was the surprise of Scott, therefore, when his master returned scarcely more than an hour after he had fled from the laundry. Bob Williamson, however, was not surprised at all. When Hiram entered the library he found the young man in his favourite position on the hearth rug, and received a friendly grin by way of greeting. Yet, strange to say, when the

eyes of the two men met, Williamson's smile faded; into the manner of both there came a curious constraint; it was quite as though they had just remembered to be greatly embarrassed over something. Again their eyes met, again they fell; and at last it was Williamson who asked, with a rising inflection,

"Well?"

Mr. Ward knew how to return that trick. "Well?" he questioned in return.

"What are you looking at me like that for?" Williamson demanded. "It's not up to me, is it?"

Mr. Ward carefully selected a fresh cigar and lighted it. "'A gentleman,'" he quoted, "'is always kind and brave and honourable. A gentleman is always ready and willing——'"

He stopped; and the corners of his mouth drew downwards into what passed, with him, for a smile. For Williamson, with an impatient exclamation, had stalked over to the window, to stand there with folded arms, staring out at the drifted masses of white.

"I believe you advised," Mr. Ward re-

marked dryly, "that we should ship the lady back where she came from? Or was it your advice that we should help her to make a quick get-away?"

"Don't. It's awful! It's the most monstrous thing I ever heard of! This girl, young as the dawn, innocent as—as a daisy (though that doesn't sound right, somehow) having lived so far out of the world as to be unaware that—er—er—certain conventions exist, blows up here, *here,* to this rather unusually conspicuous bachelor household, and announces that she has come to make us a visit! A visit! Ye gods! What a situation!"

"How well you describe it!" Mr. Ward remarked, his mouth still twisted in his own peculiar smile.

Williamson turned from the window. "You know, Hiram," he said, "you must have been a wicked man to bring this on yourself."

"Oh, don't be a clown," Hiram retorted. "And you're in it, too, aren't you? What are we going to do about it?"

"We? I tell you, it's not up to me!"

Hiram smoked for a while in silence; then he said, very seriously, "Bob, it's the first time in my life that I ever wished for a grandmother or a maiden aunt."

Williamson grinned. "You had better propose to the Widow Boyne! You'll have to in the end, anyway, and she'd make a perfectly good chaperone."

"Try again," said Mr. Ward.

"You might advertise in the Sunday papers for a companion."

"This is Tuesday."

"Well, say she is your ward, father dead, mother dead, just out of boarding school, no place else to go."

"Mr. Ward's ward! That would be great, wouldn't it? Imagine what the newspapers would make of it! I can see the headlines now!"

Williamson turned again to the window, and for a while neither spoke. A curious depression fell upon them. They knew the situation must be met, and that there was but one way to meet it. The thoughts of both moved along

the same lines. Each would rather have lost a good right hand than have disturbed the trusting innocence of their unsought guest. The one way out was to procure the kindly services of a woman.

That much they both knew; but the knowledge did very little to lighten their predicament. The wives and mothers of the Ward dynasty had never counted, except as necessary adjuncts for the time being. Their function once fulfilled, they somehow faded out of the realms of Ward; and Hiram A. had neither mother nor wife. The mere thought of taking a wife was apt to fill him with dismay. There was a certain tone in a woman's voice which made him jump as if a toy torpedo had been exploded on the floor behind him. He thought of it as "that pleasant tone," and he qualified the word "pleasant" with an adjective that it is not necessary to repeat. He had never been averse to the society of people of his own kind; he liked his club, he liked to cover the golf links with a companion or two, and he liked to go out to dinner when he could be

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sure that his hostess would place him between married women or widows. He had never been able to find anything to say to young girls, and their ceaseless chatter bored him excessively; while as for mothers—well, he was not willing to admit that mothers played fair. There were widows who would have married him in a minute, and who took no pains to hide the fact from him; but he was not afraid of them; their game was open and above-board. There was even one fair widow whose game amused him by its clever assumption of indifference. There were a few nice women of his own age, called "girls" because they were unmarried, with whom he had skated and gone to dancing-school; he was not afraid of them either, because he knew they did not want to marry him. But, on the whole, women entered into his life very little. He was not yet ready for the great voyage of discovery, being for the present perfectly satisfied with the companionship of his friend and secretary, the creature he liked most in the world, and with the ministrations of Scott and his assistants.

Now for the first time since the days of his infancy he found himself in need of what no man could do for him, of what his money could not buy. All that morning he had been thinking of the women he knew, one by one; yet try as he would, he could imagine none as being willing to shelter and guide this friendless girl, this helpless pawn of a curious Fate, dropped into his household, into his life, by the merest freak of chance, from a day of long ago.

Yet somehow, when Fate has played an especially capricious trick, she has a way of balancing it with one more kindly. Mr. Ward looked up from his meditation to behold his secretary violently waving a hand, apparently at the falling snow.

"Now what the deuce are you doing that for?" he demanded, irascibly. "You're such a clown, Williamson."

"Not always," Williamson replied, with unruffled calm. "I'm saying good morning to Kate Wendell. She's waving to me from her window; why shouldn't I wave from mine? No harm in waving, is there?"

The Miss Wendell in question was one of the nice "girls" whom Mr. Ward liked and trusted. Their friendship had begun in the days when she was the little girl next door, and he a lonely boy. When he had mentally searched through the list of his acquaintances she had been the only one to whom, he thought, he could have turned for help. But he had believed her unavailable; had not Williamson spent two whole days running errands and otherwise helping to close the Wendell house for the winter, and had not both of them, only the week before, gone to the station with the usual flowers and candies and armfuls of magazines, to see Kate and her mother safely started on their annual journey to Palm Beach? So when Williamson declared that he was waving to Kate Wendell, Mr. Ward hastened to join him at the window; but by that time the lady had disappeared.

"You're dreaming," said Hiram. "Kate's in Florida, and you know it. Would to Heaven she were not!"

"Well, your prayer is answered," declared Williamson. "Look! There she is, coming

out of the back door! I believe she's coming here! Watch her negotiate that snow! By Jove, that girl is not afraid to tackle anything!"

"Precisely!" Mr. Ward agreed, with his queer smile. They watched her cross the snowy space between the two houses; and when they had opened the front door for her she swept back into the library with them, brisk and rosy and laughing, bringing a breath of the cold air of out-of-doors, and a breath, also, of strength and cheeriness.

She was not tall; but somehow her slim, well-knit figure gave the impression that she was. She had laughing eyes and dark hair that she wore brushed straight back from her forehead and twisted too tightly into a knot behind; she had on stout boots that disdained overshoes, and a man's mackinaw coat; yet for all her ignoring of feminine details, any one would have known at a glance that the "nice girl," Kate Wendell, was a very nice girl indeed.

"Well!" she exclaimed, smiling from one to the other of the smiling men, "you didn't ex-

pect to see me back so soon, did you? It's poor Mamma! Fortunately we hadn't left Washington. She developed toothache—poor Mamma! You just ought to see her face—only she'd never let you, never in the world. It looks like a toy balloon—poor dear! And you know what it is to be away from your own dentist! So we came right home, and got in last night. I made a fire in the sitting-room fire-place, and we camped out in front of that. And this morning I thought I'd be tremendously clever and start the furnace. I did—and then, oh then! I wish you could *see* the house. Noah's flood pales into insignificance besides ours! I think every pipe in the house has burst; and there's poor Mamma and her toothache. I tried to telephone, but apparently the storm has tied up everything—so I've come for help—help—help!"

She laughed, although a trifle ruefully; but there was no answering smile on the face of Mr. Ward.

"Kate," he said, "I see the hand of Providence in your burst pipes. I'm afraid I see the

hand of Providence in your mother's tooth-ache!"

"Why, Hiram," she began, half laughing, half protesting; but Mr. Ward interrupted. He even pushed up a big chair so unexpectedly that she sat down upon it whether she would or not.

"Sit there," he commanded, "and listen to me!"

Whereupon, with Williamson's assistance, and with many questions from Miss Wendell, —questions all very much to the point,—he explained the predicament in which he found himself. It was characteristic of Kate Wendell that when she had heard the story through she did not question its truth, but immediately faced its difficulties.

"Yes," she said, "I know a little of that part of Virginia. There may be any number of people, nice people, charming people,—women, of course,—left stranded there by the War, just as unsophisticated and as pathetically innocent as this girl. I can well believe it. But——" she looked from one to the other of

the men who were watching her, "but I wonder if you realise, you two, just what it's going to be to that girl when she finds out—when she finds out—everything?"

For a moment they looked at one another; then Mr. Williamson said,

"Kate, you're a darling!"

Miss Wendell raised her eyebrows and promptly turned her back upon him. Ward frowned at Williamson, and bent over Kate to say,

"Kate, didn't I tell you that Providence brought you home? You are going to help us out! You are; and there is not another woman in the world who could. You are going to bring your mother right over here, and you are going to stay here as long as this child does. Probably half the pipes in Hilton have burst this morning, so that no one will wonder at your fleeing before the rising waters in your own house. But anyway, Kate, even our nice little Hilton will understand a neighbour's hospitality to your mother's toothache. Now that's what you are going to do, isn't it?"

She hesitated for a moment; then she stood up and held out her hand, in a simple, boyish gesture.

"Yes, Hiram," she said, "I guess that's just what I am going to do!" Then she added, "And if you'll leave it to me, I think I can persuade this little Miss—Wethersbee, is it?—to agree to the yarns we'll have to tell. I think we'd better say that she's a cousin of mine from Virginia."

"The cousin of an angel!" Williamson remarked. Then, as if to disperse Kate's quick frown, he hastened to add, gleefully, "Oh, won't the Widow Boyne adore you, Kate?"

GOOD READER, what spells *"home"* for you? A vision of big, wonderful rooms, or of small, warm ones? Music, laughter, crowds—or the patter of children's feet? Brilliant talk, the sparkle of wit, the quick interplay of thought, the welcome of friends—or coming back, in the dusk, to someone waiting? Which spells *"home"* for you?

IT WAS rather to be expected, perhaps, that Mrs. Boyne should be the first to know of the presence of guests in the Ward household; it was not for nothing that she employed a wholly superfluous third maid—a young person known to be the sweetheart of Mr. Ward's chauffeur, and a member of the church patronised by Mrs. Scott. Yet Mrs. Boyne was never so crude as to ask questions; she had invariably found that sympathy, applied at the right place, at the right time, was a little golden key which unlocked many doors otherwise burglar-proof.

The lady lived in a very small house which she called "My wee nest." It was one of those weather-worn little houses of a simpler time which are apt to punctuate the more fashionable neighbourhoods of the older New England towns; and its back windows provided an excellent view of the Ward mansion.

On the afternoon which saw the safe trans-

ference of Mrs. Wendell and her toothache to Mr. Ward's largest guest-room, Mrs. Boyne prepared an atmosphere of warm and cozy welcome; Hiram A. had never yet failed to respond to one of her little notes of half-invitation. Mrs. Boyne was often smiled upon by fortune; to-day she felt herself under one more obligation to the fickle dame, inasmuch as she had despatched the small black-bordered missive before, not after, the arrival of Mr. Ward's guests.

But four o'clock came, and passed; Mrs. Boyne watched the hands of the mantel-clock in her upstairs sitting-room move slowly around the dial to the half hour; at a quarter before five she went to the telephone. She was perhaps the only woman of their acquaintance who had never telephoned to Mr. Ward or his secretary; but to-day she had herself less well in hand than usual. Her nerves were jumping. She gave the number of the Ward mill, and spoke sharply to "Central."

Hiram A. had had enough of women for one day. He had not forgotten Mrs. Boyne's

little note. On the contrary, it somehow soothed him to make up his mind to stay away. He knew he was being rude; he wanted to be rude. His was the masculine counterpart of that feminine mood which longs to slam doors, to say disagreeable things to people; he wanted to swear. His day had been divided between trying to bully the would-be strikers into behaving themselves like well-regulated underlings, and in comfortably and pleasantly,—yes, pleasantly,—installing three women in his house; and such a day could not find Hiram A. Ward in a very good humour at its close. He swore as he hung up the receiver; but he put on his coat and went out to his waiting motor.

After all, he thought, as the car stopped before the little gray house, here at least there would be nothing of turmoil. Anywhere else he would have been met with a too-brisk cheeriness, an animated chatter; but he knew there would be nothing of the sort in Mrs. Boyne's little room, with its closely drawn curtains of yellow silk, and its wood-fire not so brightly

blazing as to suggest its having been lighted especially for his coming.

Mrs. Boyne gave her guest precisely four minutes alone in the drawing-room before she descended. In the interval Hiram A. looked around the room—as the lady meant him to. He looked about him, and sighed. It would be long, he felt, before such quiet would again prevail in his own house. Truly Mrs. Boyne was an unusual woman; none but she would have known how to use her simple things to such advantage. Most of the parlors of Hilton were austere, and apt to be "done" in cool greens or warm grays; those that were not were impossible things turned out by decorators, seemingly to use up remnants left after furnishing New York hotels. Mrs. Boyne's somehow gave the impression that it was the growth of generations. There were chairs of all ages and tables of as many more, odd bits of Chinese porcelain and mellow Derby, and Battersea enamels, all hobnobbing together in the friendliest way. In fact, that was the general effect of the room—friendliness. Even

when the curtains were drawn the windows seemed filled with sunshine; even when they were opened the room seemed warm with firelight.

Mrs. Boyne caught his last sigh as he turned to greet her; her heart skipped a beat, as it had a way of doing when she was unusually happy or excited.

"Don't make an effort to talk," she said, leaving the deepest arm-chair for him. "You must be very tired."

Mr. Ward hesitated a moment before replying. It was one of his habits, all too familiar to his business associates, a sort of mental gathering of forces which they had learned to fear; Mrs. Boyne found it alluring, a challenge, a move in the game. She knew that although his eyes were fixed upon the fire, they would see every motion that she might make, every change of expression; yet his silence was so prolonged that nervously she spoke again.

"One of my maids was ill last night," she said, "and I sat up rather late to take care of her. But your windows were still lighted

when I went to bed. I know you must be tired to-day. You really ought to knock off from work earlier."

He looked up at her, and slowly smiled. She was never certain of just what his smile signified, and perhaps Mr. Ward was aware of her doubt.

"Ah!" he said. "Yes. I believe it was late. You're very kind. But—er—I was not—er—working. No. We had—er—sickness, like yourself." He paused, and again she wondered at the quality of his smile; but he added, "Bob had a sore throat."

"Oh, poor fellow!" Mrs. Boyne murmured sympathetically. "Then it was doubtless the doctor who drove up so late!"

Again Mr. Ward turned his eyes toward the fire and apparently became lost in admiration of its beauty; again he fell into that tantalizing silence; but Mrs. Boyne was one of those women who are lured on by difficulty. Also, she was one who knew when she had come to the end of her lane. It was many years since she had, so to speak, found herself in a blind

alley, many years since she had lost her way in the mazes of any situation. Now she smiled, and shook her head playfully at the silent gentleman opposite her.

"Poor old Bob! I'm afraid you're not very much interested in his sore throat!"

"And there really ought to be a woman in the house to look after us?" Mr. Ward's rising inflection might have been thought just a trifle brutal; but the lady lost none of her smiling composure.

"Fortunately the need is filled, isn't it? Or isn't dear Kate any good at that sort of thing?"

Mr. Ward raised himself in his chair, as if a more interesting subject had been introduced. "Dear Kate," he said, "is good at everything! Great girl, Kate!"

"Lucky Kate, too, to have such a good-natured neighbor. Horrid situation to come home at night and find your house flooded!"

Mr. Ward appeared to be giving this deep thought. "Well," he said, "it's a pretty poor flood that does not carry someone on the crest of its wave!"

Then he waited. But once more he had to admit to himself Mrs. Boyne's extreme cleverness. To that last remark of his any other woman on earth would have replied, "Doubtless!" But not Mrs. Boyne. Instead, she said sweetly,

"And how fortunate Kate is to have brought another girl home with her, now that her mother is in for one of her usual winter 'spells!' You're a pretty good sort, Mr. Hiram A. Ward!" This with a bright little nod, and a move toward the tea-tray which the maid had just brought in.

Mr. Ward watched the movements of her pretty hands in silent admiration, recalling the while another hand, rosy and childlike, which had rested in his own so confidingly. Presently, when he had tasted of the cup she gave him, his smile deepened; she had remembered just how many lumps of sugar he preferred!

"Yes," she said, as if there had been no interruption, "you *are* a good sort! Think of having three guests, and women at that, all of a sudden. I should think that would tax any

house, or any servant. What does Scott think of it?"

"Oh, Scott approves."

"Well, that's a comfort! I must run over to-morrow morning and see what I can do for Mrs. Wendell. Perhaps I can help Kate out with the little girl, too."

Mr. Ward sat us straighter; for once he was caught unawares. "Help her out?" he repeated.

"Yes. Introduce her, take her to a matinée, or something. She's quite a child, isn't she?"

Mr. Ward sank back again. The remark that had startled him had been only a random one, after all.

"She's quite a child, isn't she?" Mrs. Boyne was repeating.

Hiram paused a moment before replying. "Hum! I—er—I really hadn't noticed it," he said. "Possibly she is—in some ways!"

His eyes were on the little Chinese figures in the bottom of his cup; but he saw Mrs. Boyne's face relax, as if she were suddenly relieved.

"I hadn't noticed," he repeated.

And in sudden relief Mrs. Boyne forgot that there was never one smallest thing, even upon the farthest horizon, that Hiram A. Ward did not notice. She flushed ever so slightly.

"So sweet of dear old Kate to take the little thing under her wing," she murmured, adding, with a little laugh, "One doesn't think of dear Kate as one of those whom a little child shall lead! She must find it a good deal of an undertaking! We shall *all* have to help her out!"

Then for an hour she talked of other things, while Hiram made himself comfortable in the deep chair.

He felt almost reluctant to go at all; he wished she would suggest his staying to dinner; but Mrs. Boyne never gave off-hand invitations. The walk to his own house was a short one, and the thought of her accompanied him like an intangible presence. She had warmed and fed him, and talked to him with just the right quality of soothing charm. It was not strange that Mr. Ward was thinking of Mrs. Boyne as he took his way, through the quiet of

the still falling snow, to his own house. That was one of Mrs. Boyne's qualities—that she lingered in people's thoughts after they had left her.

The desirable woman—so Mr. Ward was thinking—is she who foresees a man's moods; the one at the very heart of desire is she whose self-control is so great that she can refrain from the obvious retort discourteous. Such a woman would surely make a comfortable companion. To such a woman a man could safely entrust his house, his treasures, and the security of his declining years.

So thinking, Mr. Ward mounted the steps of his own house; and then, quite suddenly, every thought of declining years was banished as by magic.

The big bronze door was opened by someone who must have been waiting behind it, by someone who, possibly, had even been peeping through the glass. Yet no one was visible until Mr. Ward had entered the hall and the door closed again. Then he saw her, pressed back into the corner, plainly stricken with sudden

shyness, like a child who fears he may have ventured too far.

"Well!" Mr. Ward exclaimed, on that brisk, playful, condescending note which some people use towards childhood. "Well! So there you are!"

She laughed, and pressed her lower lip with her teeth, and held her hands over her breast in the gesture he had observed before.

"Yes," she said, a little breathlessly, "I'm here! I—I was—waiting for you!"

Suddenly, startlingly, Mr. Ward realised that it was not a child standing there; nor was it the girl of the night before, that wraith of long ago. The resources of Hilton's shops must have been drained that day, and Kate had proven herself something of an artist. Possibly the fashions of the moment made it easier for her; for the gown the girl wore was modish enough, yet somehow retained an appropriate air of quaintness, something of the quality of having been created for its wearer, almost of having been woven for her. It was of a material that folded about the slender form

like wisps of pinkish cloud; and Kate had seen to it that she wore her own old-fashioned brooch with its heavy gold rim. The black hair was still parted; it still drooped over the ears; yet it was almost in the fashion of the day.

No, decidedly this was not a child, nor the burdensome stranger of the morning. It rather seemed to be an embodiment of that which a man dreams of, that which he longs to find at home, that for which he strives and delves, that which he loves to cherish and enfold. It was feminity! Not the modern, strident, vote-seeking feminity, but feminity of our grandmother's kind, Evelina's granddaughter, possibly young David Copperfield's maternal aunt! And there she was behind Mr. Hiram A. Ward's front door, and she was smiling at him, and saying to him,

"I—I was—waiting for you!"

For the first time in all his career his guards were down before a woman! He watched her, speechless; and as she wavered toward him he looked, not at the whole captivating figure of her, but into her dark eyes. He saw that they

were dewy; he saw in their depths something no other woman's eyes had ever held for him—trust, unquestioning faith and trust, and gratitude.

When she was very close she turned her face up toward him, and shook her head a little as she talked.

"I have had the most wonderful day I ever spent in all my whole long life," she said, in the soft music of the Southern voice. "I have driven out in a carriage that goes without horses, and I have four new dresses, and more are coming. I have three new hats, the loveliest things I ever, ever dreamed of. I have gloves and slippers and—and—other things, you know. And Kate is a darling, a darling dear, and she says we are going to parties and dances and to see the play and the opera. Oh, I never was so happy in all my whole long life, and it's all because I came to visit you! Oh!" she clasped her hands in a burst of further enthusiasm. "Oh, I think you are the nicest and the kindest and the best old gentleman in the world!"

And so saying, she was gone! A swift rush across the hall, a flutter of rose on the stairway —and Mr. Ward was alone—yet not before she had bent her head, and left the lightest of touches on his sleeve.

It may have been that her lips brushed it—it may have been—a kiss!

But on the sleeve—Mr. Ward looked down at it—on the sleeve, where one could not be sure! If it had been his hand—yet unconsciously his one hand clasped the spot on the other sleeve that she had . . . if she had . . . had she? Then he looked again at the empty stairway—and remembered her last words.

He was the nicest old gentleman in the world!

Old gentleman! Old! He, with his palm pressed to that burning place on his sleeve, with the memory of what he had seen in her eyes . . .

Hiram went into his library, his beautiful, glowing perfection of a room that was nevertheless as empty as a broken egg-shell, and shut the door behind him.

READER, Harken! Hear the voice of that street vender. "May-flow-ers! May—flow—ers! May—flow—ers! Here's your sweet ar—bu—tus!" Breathe quickly—do you get that subtle fragrance? Turn your head—do you see, through the passing crowd, that gleam of pink? Is it a wilting bunch of mayflowers in a grimy hand, or is it a vision of hazy pinewoods, with patches of snow still in the hollows, with the pungent thrill of awakening earth rising up to you, and there, sweet and rosy as the cheeks of a waking child, pink blossoms smiling up at the sky? . . . Hark! Again. "La—ven—der! Sweet la—ven—der!" Do you see a sordid creature on the curb, sifting through his fingers a few dimes' worth of dusty flowerets—or is it an old garden that you see, with hollyhocks and box-borders and sweet herbs, and bees and butterflies and long shadows; or even, perchance, orderly cool piles of linen, lavender-scented? . . . And once again, sweet reader: "Pansies, lady? Pansies?" Ah—where are your thoughts now, where are your memories?

KATE WENDELL would have made an admirable mother of ten; as a maiden aunt she would have been a conspicuous failure. Sound and sane, brimming with energy, she could turn her hand to whatever came along, and do it well. She "went in for" things; but conquest quickly brought satiety, and she would rush on to the next new thing with equal vigour. She could out-play any man in Hilton at tennis; she could swim a mile without having to remember that she had done so; and she had tired of golf only when she had been runner-up for an international championship and had won so many cups of her own that her mother found them in the way. She had made a quite spectacular aeroplane ascension with a visiting Englishman in the days when the sight of any woman in an aeroplane was spectacular; and at one time she declared that her dearest ambition was to cross the Andes afoot. But she had also laboured for two full years in the slum-

miest settlement in New York; she was chairman of the board of Hilton's day nursery, treasurer of the Fund for the Instruction of the Indigent Blind, manager of the lunch-room for working girls that was a model to all similar institutions; and her newest activity was in the field of "Votes for Women." All men liked her and found her an inspiring companion and out-and-out good fellow; yet all men remained a little afraid of her, for there was nothing whatever about our Kate to suggest a quiet fireside. Women not only liked, but followed her; youths made her their confidenate; young girls "adored" the way she did her hair. Mrs. Wendell had been Kate's mother so long as to have forgotten that she was anything else as well. Kate even chose Mrs. Wendell's hats—which completely sums up the relationship between the two.

It was just about time for Kate to be seeking a new world to conquer; she welcomed the coming of Carey as something which offered a field of endeavor entirely new. For all her experienced matter-of-fact-ness, Kate knew how

to appreciate the poetic; and there was much to appeal to her in the girl's history and her charming self. Kate knew her own world, and thought it on the whole a pretty good one; but she could very well imagine how it might appear to this creature from a world long passed into oblivion. She knew how far life and its way had evolved since the period of the eighteen-fifties; and it was by those early Victorian standards, qualified by their transplanting among Virginia traditions of that date, that Carey would judge. Disillusionment must come, and disappointment; that was inevitable, but Kate determined that they should come as gently as possible.

Her first care was to win the girl's confidence; that was an affair of five minutes and a smile or two, for Carey believed in the goodness and friendliness of all the world, and was all-too-ready to respond to its overtures. The second care was to provide the girl with suitable clothes. Kate knew good clothes, and loved them; if she ignored the details of fashion in her own appearance, she did so with a

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deliberateness which amounted to an affectation, and she could appear as a very "mode of form" when she wished to. Her heart filled with pity at what she suspected must be Carey's dismay at finding herself queerly dressed.

At Kate's first hint, Carey flushed, and her eyes filled with tears.

"Oh, *would* you help me make over some of my things?" she asked, laying a hand on one of Kate's, and looking into her face without the least apparent consciousness of her own tears. "I—I know they are all wrong—and I worked so hard over them, too! Aunt Crishy always said you could safely trust Godey's Lady's Book as to what was genteel; and I made my dresses exactly like the pictures, except the backs. I couldn't be perfectly sure about the backs, because only the front of the ladies showed. But I thought it wouldn't matter so much if they were wrong, because naturally everyone would see the front first, you know, and——" she smiled and dimpled—"and maybe—maybe they wouldn't think about the backs after that! I thought I looked very

nice, until I got on the train. Aunt Crishy always said that ladies and gentlemen do not stare; but everyone on the train stared. At first I thought they were just ill-mannered, and probably hadn't been very well brought up; but when I got more used to being with so many people, and lifted up my veil—Oh, I was so dreadfully ashamed! Aunt Crishy always said that no lady could possibly be conspicuous; and I was! I was!"

She covered her face with her hands, and it ended in their opening the little hide-covered trunk, thickly studded with brass nails, and neatly lined with yellowed newspapers of the vintage of 1810. It was smaller than a modern week-end trunk, but it held all of Carey's wardrobe. She displayed its contents with a little air of pride.

"I chose the very prettiest things I could find among all the trunks in the attic," she explained, "and I have three gowns—three! This plaid one that I traveled in, and this apple-green silk, and—this!"

Flushing, smiling, her eyes alight, she held

up what was evidently the pride of her heart—a wide-skirted muslin, with rufflings and puffings and shirrings of Valenciennes, and little blue taffeta bows down one side of bodice and skirt.

"I thought this would do for the parties!" she said.

Kate Wendell looked; then she rose and put her arms around the girl.

"Dear, they are charming, all three of them," she declared. "I wish we wore such things now, but we don't. You must keep those just as they are. I shall see that you get at least one chance to wear that party dress. We will not try to make them over, and they are far too lovely to cut up, so we'll just buy some new ones!"

Carey flushed. "Oh, I—I don't know that I can! I—I spent all of my money for the ticket, you know, except one piece."

Then Kate heard about Mr. Mink, and the little hoard of coins found in the old writing-desk, and the journey to the Springs where the railroad was, and the man at the ticket-office, and the way it happened that it was to Mr.

Ward's house she had come. Then Carey opened a little beaded purse and took out its one coin, a large silver dollar.

"This was the biggest piece of money, and the prettiest, so I thought I'd just keep it. But I don't know very much about money. It takes a great deal to buy tickets. Does it take very much to buy clothes?"

It lay on her small, rosy palm—one silver dollar—her all! Kate Wendell looked at it, then into the girl's trusting eyes, and decided that this was no time for such a trivial matter as speaking the truth.

"Well," she replied cheerfully, "I'm sure I can't say just how much such a big dollar will buy, but probably as much as you will need for the present."

The reply satisfied Carey, and she accompanied Kate on her first visit to the wonder-world of shops with a light heart. Kate had a quiet word with the saleswomen, and all went well; money, and its purchasing power, and the need of there being any purchasing power at all, seemed to be all unknown to Carey; and

Kate discovered, before the day was over, a number of other things of which the girl was wholly unaware. Apparently the attic at Millwood had furnished all of her clothes, and somehow those faithful negroes had provided food; until she came upon the little hidden store of coins Carey had never seen money! Until the day of her first journey she had never seen a railroad train—or not since she was too tiny a baby to remember anything about it. Of social conventions—etiquette, if you prefer—she knew nothing, except that there were things genteel and not genteel, things polite and impolite, and things that ladies did not do—all measured, of course, by Aunt Crishy's standards, the standards of long, long "before the war." She was as frank as a child—or a savage—in her questions and her criticisms; yet her curiosity was not that of a child, but of an adult mind, however untrained it might be.

And gradually, as the days passed, her new friends discovered that it was not as untrained as they at first supposed. The old house at Millwood had been well supplied with books

in those days when there had been men to read and money to buy with; and Carey, it seemed, had read everything there, without restraint or guidance, from the "Spectator" and sweet Elia's essays to Miss Edgeworth and Mrs. Radcliffe; she knew whole pages of Mr. Campbell's poetry by heart, and had an intimate acquaintance with Josephus!

But they were to find out that she was all surprises, this little lady of an earlier world; Kate Wendell was thinking so, certainly, when she said to Bob Williamson, a week or two later,

"If this thing goes on, Bobby, day after day, I shall soon feel the need of a shoulder to weep upon. My nerves——"

Williamson grinned and interrupted. "You haven't any nerves, Kate; but I'll lend you my shoulder——"

"Idiot! Why don't you bluff it out, Bob, and try to make people *think* you have some sense, anyway? But really, you don't know what I'm going through! I've always believed myself truthful and honest. I'm not. I'm

just discovering my real character, and it hurts."

"What's your latest adventure in crime?" he asked, smiling at her from his place in front of the fire.

"Oh, deceiving that dear, trusting child," she told him. "I've bought her gowns and shoes, hats, blouses and gloves, countless things, and told her she could pay for them all with a dollar."

"A dollar! Well, I shouldn't have that on my mind, if I were you. You couldn't expect anybody to believe that yarn, so why worry?"

"Oh, but she does believe it," Kate declared. "I am so afraid she'll find out the truth, and hate me! Of course, so far, her credulity is amazing. It's only equalled by her frankness. The things she says!"

Williamson laughed. "Yes, I know. I heard her telling Scott the other day that Mrs. Scott must think him a very handsome man. Scott turned pale, and almost dropped the muffins. She told Hiram—poor old Hiram,

who has only the mere beginning of a bald spot—that he was the nicest old gentleman in the world. Hiram—old gentleman!"

Kate laughed. "And what has she told you?" she asked.

Williamson shrugged. "Oh, I've come in for my share, of course—'of co'se,' as she says! For one thing, she admitted to me that she loved curly hair, and thought blond, like my own, the most wonderful shade in the world."

"What was the matter with that statement?" Kate asked again, still laughing.

"Oh, *that* was all right. But I heard her say the very same thing, just the very same words, mind you, to Ned Cheney. That was what hurt. The little wretch!"

He joined in Kate's laughter, but his smile faded when Kate asked, "And what *do* you suppose she said to Jessica Boyne the other day?"

Mr. Williamson sadly shook his head. "Poor old Hiram!" he said. "The Widow Boyne is going to get him yet!"

"I'm not so sure," said Kate. "She amuses

him, because she is cleverer than the rest, and she plays more of a game. Hiram is tired of most things, most games. He has built himself the biggest mill in the country, and filled it with men and machinery. He has come nearer to cornering cotton than any one else ever has; and he has formed a huge and wicked trust, and bought a whole railroad or two. He has shot big game, and spent a winter in the Arctic, and bought pictures, and collected rare coins. I am the only unmarried female he knows who has never tried to flirt with him; so, taking it all in all, Hiram has tried about all there is, and is tired of it. Jessica Boyne is clever enough to pretend an elaborate indifference. She is doing her artistic best to make Hiram think she is unattainable. It's a new game for him, and I'll not deny that Hiram is warming up to it quite a bit. But there's no doubt in my mind as to who's going to win. And as for Carey—well, Jessica asked her to remind Hiram that he had promised to take a cup of tea with her this afternoon, and Carey replied, 'Oh, I don't think he *can* have prom-

ised, exactly, because he is going to take me down to the mill to see the machinery!'"

"Oh, how the widow must love her!" Williamson chuckled.

"And when Mrs. Mason asked her to go to the Saturday morning dancing-class with the girls, to learn some of the new steps—and you *know* how exclusive that class is, Bob!—Carey said, 'Oh, I am sorry, but I can't, possibly! You see, I always have to go down to the mill for Mr. Ward at noon!'"

They laughed; then suddenly both became serious. Their glances met, looked away, and met again. The same thought had come to each.

"I say!" said Williamson, moving uneasily. "You don't suppose——"

"No, I do not!" said Kate. "She thinks of Hiram as a sort of fairy godfather, but a very old one. You said, yourself, that she has already called him a nice old gentleman!"

But Williamson was not smiling. "That's all very well," he said, "but now I come to think of it, she and old Hiram *are* going it a bit

thick. She motors down to the mill with him in the morning, drives down for us at noon, and——"

"Nonsense!" said Kate. "All men like little girls, and she's just a little girl to him. Don't you worry, Bobby!"

"Well, all the same, no man's—er—impervious! You may speak for the girl, but it's my opinion Hiram'll bear watching!"

"Ha!" said the voice of the gentleman in question, its owner coming into the room at the moment, followed by a girl with glowing cheeks and eyes a trifle over-serious. "I'll bear watching, will I?"

Kate laughed; it was seldom that the adroit Mr. Williamson was so neatly caught. But Williamson stood to his guns.

"It's my honest opinion, Hiram, that you will," said he.

Mr. Ward lighted a cigar, and seemed to be considering its flavour. Presently he looked up, and his eyes met Williamson's.

"Well," he said, "I'm glad to know your opinion."

There seemed to be a sudden accession of something electric in the atmosphere; Kate Wendell drew Carey down beside her.

"You look tired, dear," she said. "Did the machinery make your head ache?"

"Miss Wethersbee did not like the looks of the people," said Hiram A. Then, to Williamson, he added, "They go out on strike when the gates close to-night."

"By Jove! The fools!" was Williamson's comment; but Kate cried,

"Oh, the poor souls! In this weather, too! Why couldn't they have waited until summer, anyway?"

Ward laughed grimly. "A good freeze or two will end it all the sooner," he said.

Kate's eyes flashed. "You might end it yourself, without waiting for the freeze, Hiram!" she remarked.

Mr. Ward's frown deepened. "Oh, come now Kate," he said. "You haven't the vote yet, you know! You don't rule yet a while!"

"No, we haven't," she retorted. "If we had,

you and your kind, Hiram Ward, would have more respect for our demands."

"Oh I don't know! I'm not looking for votes. I'm not politically ambitious myself!"

The reply only angered her further. "All the more shame to you, then—" she began; but Williamson intervened.

"Here! The first round's over!" he cried, pretending to step between the contestants. "Ladies are present, too! Look at Miss Carey, there, white as a ghost! I cry shame on you for frightening her!"

Kate sat down again, and put her arm about the girl. "We're horrid, dear, but we don't mean half we say!" Then, when Carey's wistful eyes were no longer to be borne, she added, "Come! Let's run up and get into something for dinner!"

But Mr. Ward, as they were leaving the room, called Kate back.

"I've been thinking, Kate—you've been spending a lot of money on—er—on—well, she *is* my ward, in a way, I suppose?"

"What'd I tell you?" Williamson remarked.

"You watch Hiram. To-day she's his ward. To-morrow——"

"Oh, that's all right, Hiram," Kate interrupted. "I'd have wasted twice as much at Palm Beach." Then her face softened. "After all, you're a very nice man, Hiram, lots nicer than most people give you credit for being. But you can't pay for that girl's clothes. Neither can I—but of course I'm going to. And may Heaven be kind to me when she finds out how much or how little a dollar will buy!"

Mr. Ward, in his embarrassment at her praise and at having had to confess a good intention, grasped at the first idea that presented itself as a change of subject.

"Why a dollar?" he asked; and when Kate had told him the story of Carey's last coin, that had been too big and pretty to be spent for the ticket, his expression considerably lightened.

"Well, now, you know, there may be just a chance," he said. "I'd like to see that dollar of hers."

So Kate ran upstairs and came back with

Carey, flushed and happy-eyed again, delighted to exhibit her one treasure.

"It's the largest money I ever saw," she said while Ward held the coin under the reading-lamp on his desk. "I don't suppose there *is* a larger money! It's a great deal for one person to have, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is," said Mr. Ward, standing up and looking from one to the other, "it is. It's a very large money indeed, your dollar of 1812! It is worth, I believe, some thousands of less important dollars."

"By the Lord Harry!" Williamson exclaimed. "You don't mean, Hiram, that it's the dollar of 1812, the dollar you tried to buy from old Poloni?"

"It is," said Mr. Ward.

Williamson explained to Kate, "They are as scarce as green pearls," he said; and added with a grin, "You ought to have seen old Hiram when Poloni refused to sell at any price. The old hook-nosed rascal collects for the King of Italy, and flatly said to Hiram that sometimes patriotism was worth more

than American dollars! Oh, you just ought to have seen old Hiram!"

They laughed. Even Mr. Ward's mouth was drawn down at the corners in his own peculiar smile. Only Carey remained serious, her wide-open eyes on Ward's face. He remembered afterward that the impression they gave him, under the shadow of her black brows and lashes, was almost as if a ribbon of cavalier's blue were banded there.

"Is that true, what he says?" she asked.

"Every word true," said Mr. Ward, smiling. He held out the coin to her as he spoke. But she put her two hands behind her.

"I am glad," she said. "Aunt Crishy always told me that people carry presents when they go visiting. But I didn't have anything to bring. I didn't have anything at all. So—" and now she smiled—"that is my present to you!"

The others were too amazed to speak; but after a moment Kate Wendell put an arm about the girl's waist and said,

"You can't do that, dear. That coin is worth

a very great deal of money, more than you have any idea of; and you cannot possibly give money to Mr. Ward."

But Carey only laughed a little. "Oh, yes," she said, "I want to! I am glad to have my present very nice."

Still the others did not speak, and suddenly Carey's expression changed, and she pressed her hands to her heart.

"Oh!" she cried. "O-o-oh! I forgot! All my new clothes—I have to pay for them! I can't give my money away, because I have to pay——"

Williamson walked to the window, and Mr. Ward bent over his desk as if to examine its fittings. Kate Wendell bit her lip, threw a pleading look at one man and the other, saw that no help was coming from either of them, then laid her hands on the girl's shoulders.

"You don't understand, dear," she said gently. "It is because it is money that you cannot give it to Mr. Ward." She was finding the explanation difficult. "A lady—cannot —give money to a man."

There was no trace of a smile on Carey's face now.

"Do you mean," she asked, "that it is not—genteel?"

She must have read the answer in Kate's eyes. A little quiver passed over her face.

"O-o-o-o-oh!" she cried, in a whisper that sounded almost like a moan, pressing her palms to her suddenly burning cheeks. Then, in a flash, she had fled from the room and was gone!

YOU WHO READ! What have you read, ere now, in glowing embers? While you watched varying gleams of light flicker across them, what visions have you beheld, what palaces of the imagination have you built, what fonder dreams have you dreamed? Have you not seen a log burn high, burn low, fall back to ashes? Has it set you musing on the bleak philosophy that all things pass? Or when only the pale ghost of the fire remained, have you seen it flare up again to a bright flame, as if to remind you that life may still lie slumbering in a heart which you thought dead?

"THERE!" said Williamson, turning from the window to frown at poor Kate. "There! Now you've done it!"

"Have I?" Kate retorted, with rising color and snapping eyes. "Have I? Then why didn't you do it yourself? You stood there like a frozen image—why didn't you *say* something?"

"Because I didn't see the necessity!" Williamson returned. "What's the use of teaching that child the—the—well, the things she doesn't know? What's the necessity, I say?"

"What things?" Kate demanded. They were facing each other like two furious children.

"Well, the—the—the things that you know, and I know, but that she need not know—that's what! The ridiculous conventions that have grown up between us and our good impulses. The lies we tell and name politeness. The evasions we call tact. The knife we use to

stab innocence and call decorum. The frauds we are, the—the—the—oh, hang it all!—the way we've traveled since the long ago where that little girl has been living. What's the use, I say, in teaching her all that?"

Kate looked at him a moment before she replied; Hiram A. seemed wholly absorbed in his cigar.

"And do you really for one moment suppose," she asked at length, with a more softened manner, "that all of us combined can manage to keep her from finding it all out?"

"Why not?" he returned. "What's all our wisdom worth, all our experience, if we can't keep that one white flower of a girl untouched by the world? Why need she know anything about it? Conventions? Bah! Let her remain ignorant of conventions and all the rest. What are they all worth, I'd like to know, compared to one trusting look from that girl's innocence and sweetness?"

Kate pondered a moment, then rallied. "And who's responsible for your 'all the rest'

is what I'd like to know! Who made the necessity for conventions, men or women? Tell me that, while you're telling so much, Bob Williamson!"

"Well, it's the women who use the conventionalities as an umbrella, isn't it?" he demanded.

"And if it is, why do they do it? Because you have jolly well seen to it that they haven't any other! That's why!"

He made an outward sweep with his hands. "Oh, well, Kate, if giving the vote to women will keep that child from the contamination of the world, you're welcome to mine any time you want it!"

Her wrath was ablaze again. "Good for you!" she cried, but without a shadow of a smile. "Good for you, Bob! That's a fine argument, as good as any man's!" Whereupon she marched out of the room with the air that a woman wears when retreat is a victory.

Mr. Ward looked up from his cigar. He spoke hesitatingly, thoughtfully.

"Er—you're forgetting, aren't you, Will-

iamson, that the gate was shut on Eden quite some time ago?"

But Mr. Williamson was still in fighting mood, ready to take up the cudgels against any one. "Meaning, I suppose, that the lady can't be left in a state of innocence?" he retorted.

"And that being so," Mr. Ward went on, still looking at the end of his cigar, "wouldn't it be the better part to provide her with a good warm cloak against the cold world beyond the gate, instead of trying to shut her up inside of it again?"

Williamson glared at his employer for a moment; then he stalked to the door.

"I don't grant that it is so," he said over his shoulder as he went out. "Eden can be where you make it."

Mr. Ward stood for a moment, apparently still concerned with that curious end of his cigar. Presently he took a turn or two about the room, and at last threw himself into his favorite chair in front of the fire.

It was a melancholy fire. Scott had a proper

respect for ashes, and there was always a comfortable bed of them left on the hearth; now they glowed red between the fire-dogs. The back-log was charred; another had broken in half, its blackened ends fallen despondently down upon the bed of ashes. Of blaze there was none. It was only the unbeautiful aftermath of a fire, as uncomforting as the memory of a shameful moment, as vague as a distressing dream. But Mr. Ward stared at that charred ghost of a fire, and saw it not. What he saw was the slight figure of a girl against the background of that seething cauldron of toil, his mill; he saw her move, wondering and a little afraid, down the long aisles, between rattling looms whose shuttles made a ceaseless pelter of sound. He saw her stopping to speak to one and another of the girls at the looms—their toil-marked figures in ugly contrast to her daintiness. He saw her face as she paused now and again to look at a child, too young for its labour, too old for childhood. He saw her in the limousine on the way home, silent, tense and straight; he saw her faint quiver,

which was yet not quite a shrinking from him, as he helped her into the house . . .

Scott came in to mend the fire, silent, deferential.

"Let it alone," snapped Hiram A.

Scott's back straightened, and he turned toward the door. But whatever his manner, his manners never forsook him; he was never less than the perfect servant. "'K you!" said he.

"And shut—that—door!" was Mr. Ward's next rasping command.

Scott's head went up, and his eyebrows. But he was safely back of the master.

"'K you," he murmured again, and most carefully and noiselessly closed the door behind him—too noiselessly; its very noiselessness was a rebuke.

Again Mr. Ward returned to his musing; but now he tried to put away that earlier memory of the girl with the dark eyes in a white face. He had mentally to fight his way, as it were, through other disturbing visions of other girls, of women waiting at home for the bread-

winners, of children coming to work in the early dawn of winter, of men too old to be kept at work yet not too old to live on and on . . . He sat up straighter in his chair, giving his shoulders a shake, moving his head as if to throw off something that weighed upon him. He mildly swore under his breath, and took out his watch, comparing it with the clock on the mantel. Then he glanced out at the darkness of the early evening, darkness emphasized by the yellow gleam of a street lamp. He thought of Mrs. Boyne, and her cosy room with its yellow curtains; then he realized that it was too late and too early for a call. It was almost dinner time. Once more he swore under his breath; then he threw the stump of his cigar into the dismal heart of the ashes, closed his eyes and rested his head against the back of his chair.

But his renewed musing did nothing, apparently, to lighten his mood; for presently, when the door back of him opened once more, again he snapped out:

"I—told—you—to shut—that—door!"

The door was closed, but something told him that the person who closed it was on the inside of it. Scott, doubtless, whose trained conscience was a thing to be reckoned with.

"What the devil do you want?" Hiram A. Ward demanded, in a tone that was half peevish, half ferocious. "I told you to let this fire alone. Can't you leave me undisturbed?"

For a moment there was silence; then came a whisper of sound—perhaps an indrawn breath, perhaps the murmur of silk. Mr. Ward opened his eyes; then thought better of it and shut them again.

"I—I didn't mean to—disturb you. I—I wasn't going to do anything to the fire. I—just thought—maybe—you were—lo-onely."

Oh, the soft voice, and oh, the lingering vowels, and oh, Hiram, Hiram, what a fraud you were! Lonely with such thoughts as have been your companions this half hour or more?

"I am," said Hiram, still with his eyes closed.

Now the murmur of silk was distinct enough; it came quite close to his chair.

"I thought I'd—just—talk to you a little while," she said.

Hiram sighed. He knew she was looking at him, so he did his utmost to give an expression of sadness to his mask-like countenance. He even sighed again.

"I've been thinking," the low voice said. "It isn't true, is it?"

"Probably not," said Hiram. "But what particular thing is—not true?"

"What the girl said—the girl I stopped to talk to. She was coughing, you know, so I stopped and said to her, 'If you'll rub your throat with goose-grease and drink a little camomile tea every night, you'll soon be feeling better.' That's what I told her. But she laughed—not a happy laugh, but the other kind, you know. And she said, 'And where'd I get the money to buy stuff with? Me, with me father sick, and me mother out o' work because she's old and slow, and all the young ones with open mouths and no shoes to their feet?'"

It was amusing to hear how well she imitated

the foreign-born accent; Mr. Ward's mouth drew down a little at the corners. The import of the words scarcely reached him; he heard such tales so often!

"Why haven't they any shoes to their feet?" the soft voice asked.

Mr. Ward did not reply.

"Why did the girl have to work, instead of her father? And why do the children keep their mouths open?"

Still Mr. Ward made no reply; and apparently Carey thought none could be made. She went on.

"And while we were talking another girl, the one nearest, laughed in that same queer way, and said, 'Ask Mr. Ward to give her the money to pay for her camomile tea!' Then both of them laughed, and looked at me so strangely; it almost made me think they didn't like me. I told them I would ask you to give them the money, and then I came away. So—you will give them the money, won't you?"

At that Mr. Ward sat up and opened his

eyes. He also opened his mouth once or twice before he could speak.

"I'll give the money to you to give her," he said at last.

He tried to meet her eyes, but she looked away. Why, he wondered, was she embarrassed? He was soon to know.

"I knew that would be all right," she said. "I knew it. I knew you were—good." She paused; her hands went up to her heart in the inevitable gesture. "It hurt me—when they said—you—were not."

"Ah!" said Mr. Ward, and began to regret that he had indulged her wish to see the big machines.

"One of them said—you—were a hard man. That—is not true—is it?"

"Yes," said Hiram A.

She smiled at that. "Oh! I reckon you couldn't joke about it, if it were true! I knew it wasn't!" The smile faded. "They—said—you would not give them money—enough—to live on. 'A living wage'—that's what they kept saying."

In every listening nerve he was aware of her nearness; but he did not speak. He was becoming filled with a regretful anger that he should have given those *canaille* the chance to speak to her, to look at her. It was only for a moment that he had been called back to the office—and Harrison had been there—the careless fool!

"One little boy looked hungry," she was saying—and oh, the tenderness of her voice! "I asked him whether his mother gave him a nice dinner to bring to work. And he laughed. But his was not a happy laugh, either—not a child laugh, but an old man laugh. He said—oh!—he said he would be hungrier soon! Oh, what did he mean by that? It's not true, is it? They are not hungry, are they? You wouldn't let them be hungrier soon, would you?"

Now she was standing in front of him—and so close that he had to push back his chair before he could rise.

He put out his hands, as if to lay them upon her arms; but they hesitated, then dropped beside him. He looked at her, and it seemed as

if all words were lost. He looked, and saw the tremble of her lips, the wistful pain in her eyes; farther down in their blue softness he thought he saw something else; it may have been her faith in him struggling to banish the new hurt.

"You should not have heard a word of such talk," he said at length. "I was wrong to let you go through the mill. It was no place for you. You should not have heard that sort of talk."

His voice sounded as if the words were hard to say. But she shook her head at him—and the wistful eyes were dewy.

"But it is not true, is it?" she besought him.

That look was not to be endured. He walked to the writing table, seemed to examine one of its costly toys, then tossed the thing down again.

"You don't understand!" he said, in that world-old excuse of man to the woman whom he would shield with ignorance.

But she came and stood by his side, and laid one of her hands upon his arm.

"You wouldn't let them be—hungry, when you have—all this?"

He recalled all the logical arguments he was so well familiar with, all the economic whys and why-nots, all the reasons and denials. In his mind he saw them as clearly and quickly as if they were flashed on a screen before him. There were a thousand things he could say, ten thousand—and he could say nothing. This child, who was also a woman, had broken through the veil of argument, swept all reasons aside; for her they had never existed. She had reduced the question to its simplest form, to the very elemental core of it. They were hungry, those others, and he had "all this." . . . It was ridiculous, it was false—so his mind was inwardly insisting. But they were hungry, and he wouldn't, would he? . . .

He turned. No other living being had ever seen that look on the face of Hiram A. Ward.

"Child!" he said; and Carey smiled.

Yes, the lips no longer trembled, but smiled. The doubt and wonder and pain were gone from her eyes. They, too, were smiling, and he

thought them as dark as the heart of a starless night, and as full of mystery and promise.

"I knew!" she laughed—yet through the laugh of joy there was a note of apology, of regret that she had seemed to wrong him by her questions. "Oh, I *knew!*"

He dared not move; but somehow her hands, warm from their pressure against her heart, found one of his; and before he could have stopped her—if he would!—she had raised it, and bent her head, and pressed her cheek against it.

"Oh, I *do* think you are the nicest and the kindest old——" . . .

"If you please, sir, dinner is served," said Scott, in no uncertain tone; and Mr. Ward had murder in his heart—a quick and painless murder, perhaps, but still murder—as he followed that admirable servitor to the dining-room. Carey was smilingly unconscious, and Scott's back was held in that rigid line which it wore when his feelings were hurt, or when something had happened which it was best to ignore!

THE mist on a morning sea; the sparkle of dew on the grass; the flash of a humming bird's quivering ecstasy; the laugh of a child; the first look of love in the eyes of a maid—where, sweet reader, where would age be, if we could but hold those?

MRS. WENDELL was making the most of Mr. Ward's hospitality, and having a very good time while doing it. She found the somewhat oppressively handsome guest-room so comfortable that she was quite content with the prospect of remaining there indefinitely; for that matter, Mrs. Wendell was apt to be content with any arrangements that Kate made. Mrs. Wendell liked comfort; she had been comfortable all her life, and never quite comfortable enough. Perhaps that was the reason why she rather dreaded Kate's energy and its varied ebullitions. For perfect comfort there can be only a certain amount of energy in any one family; and Kate had enough for ten. But of her daughter's latest activity Mrs. Wendell approved. The affair of Mr. Ward's other guest had not been told her in all its details, but the good lady was too much interested in herself to be very much interested in any one else; she was not curious, except toward new meth-

ods of "healing" and new religions. She liked Carey, and secretly thought it rather a pity that so nice a girl should be under the influence of Kate's ultra-modern theories. But that, after all, was the affair of the girl's guardian, Mr. Ward, and she supposed that a good deal might be trusted to Hiram's good sense.

She felt that she had rather misjudged Hiram until now. She had always thought him a disagreeably selfish young man; hitherto he had seemed to entrench himself behind that grotesquely huge fortune of his and peer out at the world as if he believed it was trying to entrap him. She had been very fond of his mother; they had come into the neighbourhood as brides together. She always said that poor Mattie reminded her of the first Mrs. Dombey, except that Hiram had been a boy and so there was no need for a second child; for poor Mattie had been so meek, so spiritless, even so abject. Of course, Hiram had been too young when his mother died to mourn for her, but Mrs. Wendell somehow vaguely expected a sign or two of belated grief about

him, a sort of filial aftermath of regret; whereas he seemed to get along without a mother very well. Perhaps that was because he was kept away from the other children in the street—except for occasional stolen mornings with Kate—and never even had the measles or the whooping-cough, nor any of the other things that would have made him seem more—well, human.

But clearly she had misjudged him. Hiram was really very kind, very thoughtful, very generous. Of course he could not know what a relief to their much-managed income this prolonged visit was, but he was continually doing more than could have been expected of the best of hosts—sending up to her room daily offerings in the form of large black grapes, and strawberries which looked like the pride of June and tasted like lemons or cornstarch pudding, and orchids that resembled imagined butterflies of an imagined paradise—all of which pleased Mrs. Wendell so much that she showed a protracted reluctance to get over her toothache. That, to be sure, was fortunate for

all concerned, and precisely what Hiram A. wanted.

While Mrs. Wendell remained in her comfortable seclusion, Kate was finding herself unusually popular. People called who had not left cards since the year of her "coming out." The social world of Hilton would have turned a smiling face to any guests of Mr. Hiram A. Ward; that one of them should be Kate Wendell, whom everybody had known since the days when she had been trundled "downtown" in her baby carriage, only added a zest to speculation. People asked themselves why it should be Kate, who had a perfectly good house of her own next door, who had succeeded in breaking through the barriers of that hitherto impregnable household. Her mother's toothache and the flooded cellar served very well as a first excuse; but why had she not moved back again when the leak had been repaired and the dentist had done his part? If it were any one else but Kate Wendell! But you couldn't imagine anything—well—queer, nor any sort of—of understanding (that kind

of understanding that means but the one thing to people whose legs are limbs and who retire when they go to bed) between Kate Wendell and either Mr. Ward or Bob Williamson. For one thing, if there were going to be anything of that sort, it would have happened years before; and everybody knew that Hiram A. was the most difficult man in town and Bob Williamson the most popular. So that possibility was eliminated; therefore, the interested ladies decided, the young girl whom Kate had so mysteriously brought back with her must have something to do with the odd state of affairs.

Carey, of course, knew nothing of social adroitness. It shocked her, at first, to discover that the rest of the world did not hold to her own high ideal as to the impropriety of asking questions; but she was finding many things different from what she had expected, and doubtless this was only one more. If the good ladies of Hilton failed to discover every detail of her past life, every circumstance of her coming to Mr. Ward's house, it was only because those circumstances were so far beyond the utter-

most bounds of their imaginations that they did not ask the right questions.

But in the early days of Carey's "visit" the little matter of the asking of questions brought Kate one of her most joyful moments. Mrs. Mason had come to call. Two of her daughters had found Kate and Carey at home the afternoon before; it may be supposed that what they afterward had to say was of considerable interest to their parent. Therefore, Mrs. Mason had come to call; moreover, she had come to find out what she wanted to know. To Carey, the two Miss Masons had been neither more nor less interesting than any of the other people she was continually meeting; but after their departure she had read a magic name on one of their visiting cards: Miss Mary Randolph Mason. She had given a little excited cry.

"Oh! Kate darling! *Why* didn't you tell me they were related to the Randolphs? Why, Aunt Crishy knew Miss Mary Randolph, and it was one of her cousins who married my . . ." and so on.

Therefore, when Mrs. Mason came, Carey was all excitement. At first the lady's impressive manner kept her silent; people seldom interrupted Mrs. Mason. She was one of those to whom life is a continuous ceremony. She made as much of an event of the sticking on of a postage stamp as most of us do in buying a new hat.

But when she turned to Carey and began her intended catechism with the remark, "I believe you come from Virginia, my dear," it was too much for Carey.

"Oh, yes!" she cried, bending forward, flushing. "Oh, yes! And oh! *was* your grandmother one of the——"

Then she stopped. Horror, plain, unmistakable horror, took the place of her excitement. She pressed one small, ringless hand over her lips; she gazed at Mrs. Mason with eyes of agony.

"My dear! What is the matter?" the lady cried; after all, she had daughters of her own.

Kate, too, echoed, "Why, Carey! What on earth?"

Then the little hand came down and was clasped in the other. "Oh!" said Carey in a hushed, small voice. "I almost asked a question!"

Mrs. Mason's mouth fell ever so slightly open; Kate Wendell's eyes began to gleam with fun.

"Oh, will you please forgive me?" Carey went on with an odd little quiver in her voice, bending again toward Mrs. Mason. "Oh, please!"

"For asking a question?" Mrs. Mason returned, with a most peculiar inflection. Kate bit her lip.

"Oh, I didn't *quite!*" said Carey, shaking her head in denial. "It didn't *all* come out! Fortunately I remembered in time! Aunt Crishy always said *no* lady would be so rude as to ask a question—but I didn't ask a *whole* one, did I?"

There was a moment's silence, then Kate began to talk volubly on votes for women, a subject upon which she knew Mrs. Mason held opposing views to her own, and conversation

began again; but Mrs. Mason departed no wiser than when she came. When her daughters questioned her later two small red spots came into her cheeks and she only remarked that Kate Wendell's tastes were always unaccountable—which was not precisely a reply to their questions and left them still wondering.

It was not long before the girl's unusual charm became known, and if she puzzled or failed to interest the young women, the youth of Hilton flocked to the House of Ward in numbers which justified all of Carey's old-Virginia traditions. She had her dances, her beaux, her lovers; her flowers and little notes; she even had her serenade. For she was the rosy heart of feminine appeal, unalloyed, unspoiled. Self-consciousness had no part in her; her small coquetries were as artless and bewitching as a child's, and oh! how those youths adored them! They adored them all the more because they must be sought, for she met them first with just that mixture of allurement and reserve which makes the one irresistible appeal to the hunting instincts of the male. They

knew there were dimples lurking, even while they felt her measuring themselves; and what that is masculine does not love to preen itself before such a glance?

"It's disgusting," Mr. Williamson said to her very sternly one late afternoon when a bevy of swains had reluctantly departed, "perfectly disgusting the way you flirt with those boys."

She turned to him an introspective look, plainly weighing what he said.

"I don't flirt with them," she decided.

Williamson still glared. "Don't you? I wonder what you call it?"

Then she dimpled. "Oh, I can't help letting them see how nice I think they are!" she said.

And that, perhaps, was her ultimate appeal —that she was so ready to believe everything "nice." Everything was new, everything was wonderful, and the most wonderful and delightful of all were those things of which she had had no fore-knowledge. For those were the things which she need not weigh, having no

standard by which to measure them, as she measured people. The treasures and wonders of Mr. Ward's house alone would have kept her interested for months. Then there were the shops—little thresholds of paradise, surely! And the commonplace mechanism of daily life, the mere things of the streets, that other people were so accustomed to as to have forgotten their magic—the rows of lamps that were so mysteriously lighted every night as the dusk came down; the telephones; the motor-vehicles, and the crowning magic of all that was played behind the footlights or, were that your mood, brought to your own fireside by the mere turning of a crank and inserting of a thin black disk.

Yet beneath her wonder, back of her reserves, over and above all her enjoyment, she had her loyalties, her firm affections. Mr. Ward was the first of them, it seemed, although there were Kate and her mother and Williamson and Scott—who was nothing less than devout in his admiration. But it was Hiram who held first place in her feeling, whatever it was

—loyalty or affection; and whatever it may have been, it was of a kind that gave Bob Williamson, as the days passed into weeks, no uneasiness, and perhaps brought small satisfaction to Mr. Ward himself. But of that, if it were true, the imperturbable gentleman gave no sign. Apparently he took what she had to give him with his usual calm philosophy. He watched—smiling sometimes, sometimes with a grim amusement lurking in his eyes—her devoted company of young men and the way she managed them; he watched young Williamson, and latterly fell into the way of showing him more frequently those little evidences of affection that men can exhibit without apparently doing anything at all. He knew just the day when Bob dropped the "Miss" and called her "Carey"; he himself used the title and surname invariably, for a time. Then the matter of nomenclature seemed to trouble her.

"Why don't you call me Carey?" she asked him one day.

Mr. Ward was sitting deep in his usual big

chair, his elbows on its arms, his hands raised before his face with the finger-tips touching. He appeared not to have heard her question. It was one of the times when she had sought him out in his library in the quiet half hour before dinner. She was standing on the rug before the fire-place, and now came a little closer, as if to emphasize the question, which she repeated.

"Isn't it time for you to dress for dinner?" Mr. Ward asked.

"O-o-oh!" she drawled, in a most reproachful tone. "If you'd only just lo-ok at me, I reckon you'd see whether I ought to dress for dinner!"

He looked, and she revolved in front of him. The dress was new, and pink as the dawn. . . . Again he looked away. She stood still, but he was unaware of the reproach in her eyes.

"You didn't look!" she accused him.

"Yes, I looked," said he. "It's—blue, isn't it?"

For a moment she stood in front of him, silent, looking down; then she turned and

walked toward the door. But at that Hiram sat up.

"Carey!" he cried.

She paused, turned, came back again. "Oh, I don't see why you're always trying to make people believe you are—are—cross, and—and——"

"Disagreeable?" he suggested.

She nodded. "Of course, *I* know how nice you are, and kind, and generous. *I* know all about you, naturally! But—there *are* people, you know— *Why* do you behave so?"

"H'm!" said Hiram A. "You know all about me, do you?"

"Well, almost," she said.

He smiled, and looked up at her, putting his head back against the chair. "Why almost?" he asked.

"Well, there's one thing I don't know. I'd like to. I've often wondered!"

What was it that made Hiram A. remember a day, long years before, when he had been haled before his father on a dreadful charge of having stolen olives? He had quite for-

gotten that curious sensation in the pit of his stomach, a sickening sensation as if the floor were dropping with him.

"H'm!" he grunted again.

She came to the side of his chair. "I've wondered, and wondered, and *wondered* what they used to call you when you were a darling little baby!"

The floor sank no further, but Hiram sat up.

He glared at her, then snapped out, "I never was a darling little baby—never!"

"Yes, you were," she returned. "A darling —and so *fat!* There's a picture of you in a bureau in my room. Your hair stood up in a little wave all along the top of your head, and your dear little wrists look as if there were strings tied around them. But I *do* wonder what they called you!"

The room, thought Mr. Ward, was growing unaccountably warm! "They called me Hiram," he said, with great dignity. "Just Hiram."

"Oh! O-oh! They couldn't have called a darling little baby—Hi-ram!"

Mr. Ward's face flushed. "I tell you I never was a darling little baby," he said, with what dignity he could assume. "And there's nothing against the name, anyway! My father's name was Hiram—Hiram Ebenezer; and his father was Hiram Josephus. My own name is Hiram A. There is nothing really wrong about the name of Hiram, as far as I know!"

He was glaring at her, but her face brightened. She even laughed a little, a laugh that seemed to hold relief and something of apology.

"Of co'se!" she cried. "How stupid of me! They called you by your middle name, just as they did me!" She paused, swayed ever so slightly nearer to him, her rosy draperies brushing the arm of his chair, and asked, "What *is* your middle name?"

Mr. Ward arose and faced her. "Would you mind telling me," he asked, "why you are so interested in my name?"

Her smile was the one that made those youths her willing slaves. "Because I don't

want to call you Mr. Ward any more—that's why! I—I like you, you know!"

Still she smiled, her head ever so slightly turned aside; still he looked at her.

"Of co'se, if you don't want to tell me," she said, "I could call you—*uncle!*"

For a moment neither moved nor spoke. There was no analyzing his feelings now; had there been . . .

"Carey!" he cried, but under his breath, as it were.

She looked up at him, and the look brought the blood pounding from his heart, drove every vestige of color from her cheeks.

"Oh!" she cried, and whispered, "Oh!"

Then she pressed her hands over her heart—and fled!

HARK! Do you hear that pulsing, rumbling, moaning? Is it the beat of marching armies—or the tread of multitudes on city streets? Is it the protest of the hot core of the world—or the grinding wheels of commerce, weaving, endlessly turning? Is it the murmur of the sea, the wind in the trees, the voice of grief or travail—or is it the swift on-rush of the Modern, ever driven on and on by its own restlessness, struggling for breath like a thing hard-pressed, devouring its own life by its own relentless energy? Hark! Which can it be?

"HIRAM," said Kate Wendell on the fifth day of the big strike, "I'm afraid Mamma and I shall have to open our own house and go home."

Mr. Ward turned back into the dining-room, while Carey and Williamson went on. They had been troublesome days, the four just past, and he knew there were many even more troublesome in the future. Kate's departure, with the changes that inevitably must follow it, would be in the nature of one of those domestic unheavals that men of Ward's type find it so hard to endure at any time; when they are unusually harassed by business, such upheavals are little short of being catastrophes.

Therefore Mr. Ward regarded this disturbing person with a frown.

"Why?" he demanded.

"Think how long we've been here!" she re-

plied. "And, after all, you haven't legally adopted us, you know! Good old Hiram!"

Still Mr. Ward frowned. "What's the real reason?" he asked. As she hesitated he added, "Out with it, Kate! I thought you were a good sport."

"Perhaps *that's* the real reason, Hiram," said she. "Perhaps I'm too good a sport to—to do some things."

"What things?"

"Well, if you will have it—I think you're all wrong on this strike question, you know; I'm on the strikers' side, and what's more, I'm going to work for their side just as hard as I can. But I can't very well do that and stay here in your house, can I?"

Hiram looked down to hide the twinkle in his eyes; the situation appealed to him; it was the most amusing thing that had happened during these troublesome days. But Kate did not see the twinkle. In fact, she saw no farther than what she thought Hiram ought to be thinking, and it was to that imagined state of mind that she spoke.

"Of course we're awfully grateful, Hiram; you've been a regular old duck to Mamma. And of course we won't leave Carey on your hands; we'll take her with us."

Hiram walked the length of the room and back. Then he asked, "What do you want to do? Picket for them?"

"Yes—and plan the picket work for the others."

For a moment she wondered just how furious Hiram was, but to her amazement he suddenly threw back his head and laughed—laughed loud and long. It was the first time in years that Hiram A. Ward had laughed like that. But it did not amuse Kate Wendell. She stared at him with an expression where pique and amusement were at odds. At last he spoke.

"Oh, Kate, Kate! That's the best thing I've heard in years! Good old Kate! I tell you what I'll do! You stay right on here—I couldn't do without your mother, couldn't possibly—and I'll take you downtown with me every morning, leave you in the camp of the

enemy, and call for you on my way home. There'll be one cheering thing about this strike, anyway!"

Kate flushed. "Thanks," she said dryly. "I'm glad you can find a joke in it somewhere. This strike is not a joke to me."

Still he laughed. "Not a joke, but a pleasant little way of passing the time—a new amusement—something to exercise ourselves about, something by means of which we can show how clever we are—eh, Kate?"

"Now you're odious!" she cried. "You'll see to what good purpose we can exercise ourselves before we're through with it," she added, nodding at him portentously.

"You'll be wasting your time, my dear girl!" he returned.

"I shall not be wasting my time, because we are going to win this strike. You'll see. But even if we lost it, it would be worth something to convince you men, you mill-owners, that we are human beings to be reckoned with. You take it for granted that we are to work; you aren't willing to admit that we are to be reck-

oned with—that we have a right to think, especially to think for ourselves."

"To think for yourselves—you mean that we aren't willing to recognize your union?"

"That—for a beginning."

"But what good would your blessed union *do?* What's to be gained? There isn't a mill in Hilton that hasn't a lunch room for the girls. Some have baths and social secretaries. All have free medical attendance, all have the best and latest of safety appliances. All pay good wages and keep within the laws. *I* can't see what more we can do, unless it's to start a matrimonial bureau and a millinery parlour! What the dickens are they going to *gain* by their union? What's the use, *I* say?"

"Recognition."

"But what——"

"Recognition—just that! That's what would be gained. You've always taken it for granted that women have to work; you won't admit that they are to be reckoned with, that they have a right to be heard on their own account. That's what recognition of the union

would give them. That's why we want it. Every woman wants to be heard on her own account. Every woman has a right to that much. That's what the men are asking, and that's what the women are asking."

"Well, they won't get it. A few years ago they made us give a five per cent. increase of wages. Then they wanted fifty-six hours and the same pay as for fifty-eight, and they got it. Now they want recognition of their union—and I'll be boiled in oil before I give in to them! You may be my emissary and carry your friends that message, if you like. We've pampered them too much—that's what's the matter!"

"Yes, that *is* the trouble—your old-fashioned masculine attitude that pampering will do instead of justice. You——"

But Hiram thought he had heard enough. He threw his hands over his head, and laughed. "O-o-oh! Come now, Kate! Let's call it off! You may lecture me all the way down town and back every day, as long as you can encourage your—er—your sisters to remain on strike!

You can inform me to your heart's content! Think of the opportunity! Think of it! Come, be a sport, and say you'll stay!"

She was still flushed, and although she had to join in his laugh, there was the joyous light of battle in her eyes.

"All right!" she said. "And you're something of a sport yourself, Hiram!"

So the pact was sealed. Ward and Williamson got considerable amusement out of the situation; Kate remained a little defiant, but went to the strikers' headquarters every day.

"I'll make use of every bit of information I can get out of you, Hiram," she warned her host; and Ward smiled.

Thereafter the city of Hilton daily witnessed the unique and edifying spectacle of the leaders of the opposing forces amicably motoring down together to the headquarters of their respective camps. Up-town Hilton laughed, and said that it was no more than you could expect of Kate Wendell and Hiram A. Ward, since you never knew what to expect of either; down-town Hilton knew its arch-friend and its

arch-enemy too well to suspect either of a secret understanding on the point at issue.

But to make the situation plain to Carey was a more difficult matter.

"Dear," said Kate, wondering what expression her words would bring into the serious eyes that had lately beheld so many marvels, "I do hope you are not going to be lonely. I shall have to spend a good many hours down town, for a while."

Carey beamed. "I'll go with you!" she said.

But Kate shook her head. "I can't take you with me, darling. I have got work to do, hard work."

Carey looked at her in utter amazement; then it was plain that she was trying to readjust her mind to Kate's announcement. It was characteristic of her that she never doubted a statement of one of her friends, however hard to understand it might be. She accepted, then made her own mental adjustments. So it was now; for in a moment she smiled again, and asked,

"How many will you take?"

Kate was certainly unprepared for that question; she had not the least conception of Carey's line of reasoning which had prompted it.

"How many will I take, dear? How many what?" she asked, with an odd little twisting of the brows—a trick of hers when she was puzzled.

"Boa'ders," said Carey.

"What?"

"Boa'ders! I'm very sorry you have to, honey, but of co'se I know other ladies have had to do the same thing. Aunt Crishy knew one—Miss Bettie Dangerford, the widow of Major Harry Dangerford, she that was Bettie Todbee, you know. Her mother was a Custis —and you know what *that* is! She took boarders in Charlottesville after the Major died, and everybody thought it was so noble of her that they just flocked to her house. Colonel Dangerford Clendenning, that was her husband's cousin, even gave up his own house to go and boa'd with Miss Bettie."

Kate was half-laughing, half-amazed. "But

whatever makes you imagine that I am going to open a boarding-house?" she demanded.

"Why, you said you were going to work, didn't you? What else can a lady do?" Then her face brightened. "Oh!" she cried, clasping her hands, bending forward excitedly, "oh, you *don't* mean to say you can write poetry for the newspaper, do you?"

Now Kate rocked with laughter. "Oh, oh, oh!" she cried. "No! I cannot write poetry, but I am not going to run a boarding-house, either! My work, dear, is—is—real work, down town, you know!"

Carey's face looked troubled. "Oh, Kate! Not really and truly?"

"Really and truly. I'm going to work with the mill-girls."

"Not—not with—those poor girls that—oh, *Kate!*"

Kate nodded emphatically. "With those same poor girls that you saw in the mill, the very same."

For a moment Carey stared at her, a picture

of distress; then, to Kate's surprise, she jumped up and ran out of the room.

But in another moment she was back, had dropped something into Kate's lap, and danced away toward the window, sparkling with pleasure and excitement.

"There!" she cried. "There! You said I couldn't give it to a gentleman, but I reckon I can give it to *you*. So you just take it, Kate darling. It's every bit yours, your very own! I don't need it at all, not at all! I've got enough of everything to last me a lifetime—and there are all the things in the attic at Millwood, too! I can go on making those over for years and years—probably as long as I live!"

Scarcely understanding at first, Kate took up what Carey had dropped in her lap. It was a purse, a quaint little beaded affair that Carey had brought from Virginia; and in it was a roll of bills and some large gold pieces, evidently all that was left of the money Mr. Ward had paid for the wonderful dollar of 1812!

Kate looked at it, looked at Carey—and un-

derstood. Her eyes grew misty, and she crossed the room to put her arms about the girl.

"You darling child," she said, in a tone more moved than any one else had ever heard from her. "You dear, darling child! Do you mean that you are giving me your money so that I shall not have to work?"

Carey nodded, still beaming. "Of co'se!" she cried. "I don't need it at all!"

Kate walked away a few steps, then back. "My dear," she said, "if I needed money, I would take this. I really would. But I am not going to work because I need money. I am going to work because I have to—because there is something in me that makes me have to. I am going to work to help other women, those women in the mills. They need my help, you see. They are in trouble, and I think perhaps I can help them. I shall not work for money at all; for that matter, I shall be using my own money, as well as my time and effort. But,"—she added from the honesty of her soul, although she knew Carey would not under-

stand, "but I am not only doing it because they need me, but because I just *have* to work, when anything comes along that I can do."

"I don't understand," said Carey. "You say you *have* to work—why, you're a lady, Kate!"

"Yes. In a way, that's one of the reasons why I must work; but it's not the truest reason."

She saw the wonder on Carey's face, the troubled look in her eyes—the look almost of bewilderment—and knew that she must try to make her understand; yet to explain to a lady of the early eighteen-fifties the unrest of the woman of nineteen-sixteen—would it be possible?

"The true reason is inside of me, Carey. Life to-day is not as it was in your Aunt Crishy's time. You have discovered that. You have seen the electric railroads, the telephones, the automobiles, and all the other wonders that are so commonplace as to be no longer wonderful at all to us who use them. Things have changed, and so have people. Most of all, per-

haps, women have changed. We have changed so much that we would rather think of ourselves as women than as ladies. We no longer want to stay at home and be protected by our men; we want to do our part in making the world go round—to put our shoulders to the wheel, or our fingers in the pie, some would say. Some of us, to be sure, want it more than others; I don't believe the women who have little children want it quite so much. But you see, dear, I happen to be one of those who *do* want it very much. I want to help; but I love the work just because it is work."

She looked wistfully at Carey. "I wonder if you understand even a little?" she added, rather to herself.

"It is very strange," Carey said. "There are so many strange things, aren't there?"

"You see, the world was growing fast, all those years while Aunt Crishy lay in bed grieving for her lover. And you had no one but your Aunt Crishy to tell you anything."

"I know," said Carey; then, as if to apologise for her lack of other teachers, she gave a

bit of family history that Kate had not heard. "But I was very lucky to have my dear Aunt Crishy. You know, my mother and father were lost at sea, and if it hadn't been that they had left me home with Aunt Judy, I should have been lost, too. My mother didn't know very much about babies, so when I came she sent to Millwood for Aunt Judy, who had been her nurse and Grandpapa's too. My father had no family at all, except Mamma and me; so when Aunt Judy heard that my father and mother were lost at sea, she just toted me back to Millwood and Aunt Crishy and Aunt Belinda. And I was mighty lucky to have them!"

The loyal little outburst drew Kate to her side. "You darling!" she cried again. "Of course you were! And your Aunt Crishy must have been wonderful!"

So, for the moment, Carey was satisfied; yet when Kate actually went off the next morning with Hiram, and the next morning and the next, Carey pondered this strange state of affairs, and spoke to Williamson about it.

Hiram, these days, was morose and preoccu-

pied; and Carey was a little hurt, too, at his refusing any longer to permit her to accompany him to the mill and back. Mr. Ward excused his refusal on the ground of possible danger from flying missiles, and of wishing to spare the girl any knowledge of what those silent, surly groups of men and women on the street corners signified; but as a matter of fact, the reason was not in his excuse, but in a word or two dropped by his friend, Mrs. Boyne.

The lady was far too wise in her generation to rebuke him for his growing neglect of her; she could only say, in a most friendly manner,

"How good you are to Kate's little friend!"

Hiram had looked at her out of the corner of his eye, and grunted; he knew very well that she would follow up her lead.

"It is a quality of great men to love children, I think," she went on, pensively. "Mrs. Mason was saying the other day that people were beginning to suspect things between you two. I laughed! It is amazing how little people—the general run of people—understand large minds."

Mrs. Boyne said no more; she had a comfortable consciousness that a less skilful woman would have gone farther, would have hinted what she would scarcely have dared to say; she was pleased with herself, and content to let well enough alone, feeling certain that the "well enough" would be Hiram's more frequent visits to herself and his seeing less of Carey. Hiram, of all men, loathed the gossip which attached his name to that of any woman, and would go far to avoid giving occasion for it.

But Hiram had not replied; he had only thoughtfully fondled the lobe of one of his ears, and begun to talk about Mrs. Boyne's newest find in porcelain. Hiram had a keen nose for traps of all kinds; it had been many years since one had snapped on him. The only result of Mrs. Boyne's little manœuver was his forbidding Carey's continuing her motor-drives with him.

But the new arrangement left Carey very much alone. Of course there was Mrs. Wendell, and of course there was Scott; but of

neither of these estimable persons could she make a companion. All the girls she had met seemed to have innumerable occupations of their own. Hilton's young men were not butterflies, but night-moths; their social activities could only begin when daylight's working-hours were over. Of course she had all the treasures of the great house to examine; but those could not take the place of human companions. At Millwood, where there had been no one but little aged Aunt Crishy upstairs in bed, no one to come and go, nothing to see, nothing to do, she had never been lonely; but this wonder-palace, when the three friends were away, was a veritable desert of loneliness.

Naturally enough, the strike was the subject most to be avoided in conversation whenever the members of this curious household were assembled, which was now but seldom. Kate was perfectly willing to meet her host in open warfare, but she had too strong a sense of fair play to heckle him at home. Hiram never discussed his affairs with any one but Williamson, and the greater his anxiety the more silent

he became. And as for Williamson—he was finding himself in a very bad humor with all the world. He made no secret of heartily disliking Kate's agreement with Hiram, and warmly berated her for her activities. Carey had found him a very good playfellow indeed, at first; but lately he had a disturbing way of glowering at her, of answering in short monosyllables, of appearing when he was not expected—of watching her, absurd as that would have seemed. But for that mater, every one in the house seemed to be cross, and tired, and rather disagreeable under the surface; so that, altogether, she was a very lonely Carey these days, and if it had not been for Mrs. Boyne the hours would have dragged even more.

Mrs. Boyne was sympathetic; perhaps she, too, was lonely. Certainly—even though she did not say as much to Hiram—she had seen very little of her friend Mr. Ward since the installation of his guests. Outwardly, she accepted the situation as much and as little as every one else in Hilton; Kate Wendell and Hiram Ward had been doing remarkable

things for years, and as they were old friends and certainly not sentimentally inclined toward each other, it was not so very remarkable that now they should be doing unaccountable things together, if their tastes lay that way. The spectacle of Hiram's driving Kate down town every day to her picketing against his own mill was diverting enough, in all conscience! As for Kate Wendell's being in his house at all—oh, well, there it was again! And of course Mrs. Wendell did have the toothache; that was visible to all observers. And everybody's pipes had burst that first day. The little friend? Miss Wethersbee? Oh yes—most attractive! Hilton smiled again; the masculine part of it smiled one way, the feminine portion smiled in another way; but whatever thoughts were back of the smiles went for the most part unexpressed.

Unmistakably, however, Hilton was thinking. Mrs. Boyne was thinking, too. For she knew more of that midnight arrival than she had confessed to Hiram; and Mrs. Boyne was of the type which, when it knows a little, sus-

pects much more. What puzzled her most about the situation was Kate Wendell's part in it. It was not like Kate, and certainly not like Mrs. Wendell, to lend themselves to anything—well, anything dubious; and then, there was the girl herself. That completed the puzzle. She undoubtedly had the manner of being a lady. Yet Mrs. Boyne knew, from those back-door sources of information which she did not disdain to use, that the girl had arrived alone, at midnight, a stranger, totally unexpected; and, the next day, there she was installed—intrenched, even—with the Wendells, the good, respectable, well-born, well-bred, irreproachable Wendells, to give a tone, a veil, a good face to a situation that ought to have shaken the social fabric of Hilton to its foundations.

To say that Mrs. Boyne was curious would be but to give a faint echo, a shadow, of the truth. As the days passed, and Hiram A. forgot so much as to answer one or two of her notes, as his visits became noticeably fewer, as she watched—from that convenient upstairs window—his daily departure with Carey be-

side him or later with Kate and Bob Williamson—as she watched and waited, and thought and thought, the lady's determination gathered unto itself the strength of the desperate. There was only one vulnerable point, as far as she could discover, which her curiosity might pierce. She would see all she could of Carey.

Accordingly, scarcely a day passed that she did not do something for the girl's pleasure—a walk, a drive, or only a chat; a shopping expedition, a play. And always, without arousing the least suspicion on Carey's part that she was being questioned, Mrs. Boyne gathered a bit of information here and another there, so that by the time the strike had been "on" for a fortnight there was very little that she did not know about the real state of affairs in the house of Hiram A. Ward.

READER, consider! An unmarred surface of snow, and beneath it—decay; the crowding of sap in a clambering vine, and in its touch—poison; the small, dark seed of a sun-kissed blossom, and from it—unclean sleep; the regal velvet of a rose-drunken bee, and hidden —a sting; the chance mis-step on a thing in the grass, and darting, suddenly—death; the hands you have filled, the mouth you have fed, and—reviling! Why? Why? Why need they be? Why?

THE strike took the way of most strikes. To those vitally concerned it was exciting enough, full of incident, all-important. Other people read of it, wondered, and forgot all about it—until there came one of those occurrences which focus the attention of the newspaper world and are told in black headlines on the first page. Toward the end of the third week, there was an affair of a burning fuse discovered in the yard of the Ward mill, a fuse attached to a box containing ominous black sticks, the arrest of a man who had been seen lurking near. Thereafter, Mr. Ward spent long hours on watch in the mill office, taking turns with Harrison and Bob Williamson. Excitement grew; there was even a rumour that troops would be sent into the city; and on a day when March, as if to proclaim herself the dominant month of winter, had gathered her forces for one last battle with invading spring, Williamson had been

sent to the capital to protest against the coming of the soldiers.

The atmosphere of the Ward house seemed heavy with portent. Carey wandered restlessly about, storm-bound; Mrs. Wendell, always one of those women who feel themselves slighted by any absorbing activity on the part of others, had shut herself into her room. Kate, of course, was picketing. There was no one to talk to but Scott.

At last, when she had dined in solitary state and could no longer endure her own company, Carey went into the pantry—and was made subtly aware of Scott's disapproval.

But Scott thawed.

He was a man of varied information, was Scott. Had circumstances fallen differently, Scott would have graced many a dinner-table at which he had served. Also, he was a person of cultivated tastes. The harmonica, now—Scott was quite an adept with the harmonica; he could perform a little on the flute, too, and Mrs. Scott was fond of accompanying him upon the banjo. Yes, Miss! The combina-

tion of instruments was a trifle unusual, doubtless; but Scott assurred Miss Wethersbee that it was none the less pleasing. He and Mrs. Scott—Mrs. Scott especially—went quite often to Noli's—the vaudeville theatre—to hear those dexterous performers who occasionally graced its boards. Only to-night, Miss, was Mrs. Scott going to hear the Adelanti family in their Marvellous Musical Exhibition. . . .

Well, it was a temptation, and Scott yielded. Carey urged, argued, and laughingly commanded; no one would ring at the door to-night, in all this storm, and she would wait until Mr. Ward returned, and could perfectly well find the little supper Scott would leave in the refrigerator. Why, *why* should he miss this Marvelous Musical Exhibition, and so on and so on. Scott yielded, and went forth to join his wife.

Warmed by the glow of a kindly action, still smiling, Carey went into the library. Curiously, for an undecipherable reason, it was a room she usually avoided when no one was

there; it was such a very personal room, so very much Hiram's. To-night, however, she needed whatever of companionship its voiceless personality could give her. She curled up in the big wing chair in front of the fire, and watched the minutes grow into an hour or more. Then she started; the front-door bell had rung.

But Carey and fear were strangers. She went into the hall, opened wide the door. . . . A woman stood there—in her arms a bundle that was a baby, a child dragging at her skirt, another seated on the step of the vestibule as if its little legs refused longer to bear its weight. . . .

"Oh!" cried Carey. "Oh, you poor thing! Come right in!"

She ran down to the vestibule, lifted the child from the step, and talking, urging, murmuring words of pity, little mothering sounds of pity, she led them inside.

The woman's manner of surly defiance fell from her. It was not the reception she had looked for. She had expected rebuff, and here

was open-armed kindness. She had expected to be ordered off; instead, she was led into a wonderful warm room, wonderful like a church, she thought, because it was so still and beautiful and somehow made you want to lower the tone that you had thought would be necessarily loud and assertive. And instead of a wooden image of a man-servant, or a maid in one of those ruffled aprons you saw in the shop windows in January, here was a young lady, a real young lady in a soft gray dress, and she was kneeling down on the rug beside Tommy (whose hands his mother had not remembered to wash before they started off on this expedition), and she begged to hold the baby, and unwrapped him, and lifted his dress to toast his little toes at the fire.

Two months earlier Carey would have taken for granted that the strange little company had simply come, as she had come, to spend a night or two, or longer, in a house where there was room for "always one more." But now she knew better. They were poor, these wayfarers, and the poor and the rich were separated by a

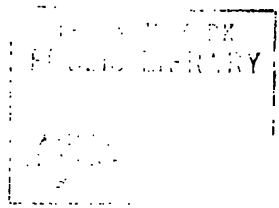
barrier as impregnable as it was invisible. Why had they come, in the storm and the darkness? She recalled the words of that girl in the weave-room—could it be that they were hungry?

She jumped to her feet, upsetting the little girl and greatly disturbing the baby.

"Here!" she said to the mother, depositing the owner of the little pink toes on her lap. "Here, hold the baby and wait for me! I'll be right back!"

She had not a thought for the hoarded treasures in the library; no other member of the Ward household would have dared to trust those strangers in the room at all, much less to leave them alone with all its wealth. But Carey had but the one thought—to feed them. She ran through the dining-room to the pantry, and opened Scott's immaculate treasure-house, the refrigerator. Mr. Ward's late supper was there, all arranged on a tray; to it she added milk, and more food, and then a goodly pile of bread; and returned, triumphant, joyous, bending a little with the weight of her bur-

"I wouldn't touch his food if I was starving—not when it's given to me that way!"



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den, to the quartette in front of the library fire.

"See!" she cried to the children, kneeling down, and filling their outstretched hands with all they could hold. "See—such goodies! How much can you eat? Suppose you try to show me!"

They fell upon the food with the ferocity of half-starving childhood; and as she watched them Carey's eyes filled with tears. She rose.

"Why, they *were* hungry!" she said; then, because the mother was looking at the bread she held, untasted, "Aren't you hungry, too? Why don't you eat?"

Then the woman did a strange thing. She threw the bread to the floor, stood up, held the baby closely to her breast, and backed away—away from the fire-place, away from Carey.

"I won't touch his food!" she cried. "I wouldn't touch his food if I was starving—not when it's given to me that way! Not when it's given as a present, when it's all ours by rights! I won't touch his food! It ain't what I come here for!"

Carey's face grew pale; she was too amazed to speak. It was as if the woman had thrown the bread directly into her face, so brutal seemed the repulse. The woman went on—a wild torrent of words pouring forth, while the ravenous children ate, cramming their mouths, grasping greedy handfuls from the dainty tray, not listening to the angry voice of their mother—possibly too accustomed to it to hear it at all, just as one does not hear the striking of a familiar clock. But Carey heard.

"That's the way with you rich folks—you like the way it feels when you hand us out food, and clothes you wouldn't wear yourselves! But I won't take it! It ain't what I come for! I want to see Hiram A. Ward, that's what I want!"

Then Carey had to listen to what the world of the mill-workers thought of Hiram A. Ward—had to hear in full and ornate detail just why he was hated, and just how much; of all the crimes they attributed to him, the personification of his class; of how they despised his charities even while they accepted them.

All the accumulated bitterness of the woman's soul seemed to let itself loose upon this sheltered, dainty creature who seemed to be wrapped in luxury—the luxury of the hated House of Ward. Doubtless the discussions of the strike had made their impression on the woman, and now she made the most of her opportunity to hurl them at this defenseless person who represented the other order, the other class. She would have made a dangerous leader of a mob; she loved to hit out with her hands, and she often struck her children; now she was enjoying, almost to the point of frenzy, striking this other woman who dwelt in the camp of the arch-enemy.

Carey heard; and when the woman had ranted all she could against Mr. Ward, she poured out other things, things of the gutter, things of dark streets and darker hearts.

That was the scene upon which Hiram entered. He had rung his own door-bell—a thing seldom necessary when Scott was expecting him—and, as he waited, the sound of a shrill, horrid voice penetrated beyond the

door. He tried the knob, his heart beginning to beat as it had not in years. He had no idea what was wrong within—but Carey was there. The door would not open—Scott did not come—he muttered an exclamation appropriate to the minute, and felt for his key-chain. Another moment, and he was at the library door.

At a glance he took in the whole scene—at a single glance, yet his eyes seemed only to rest upon the slender gray figure on the hearth-rug. But she did not look at him; she was watching the furious virago across the room, as a bird watches the serpent that would devour it. Her hands were pressed to her heart, in that beloved gesture. Her lips were parted, and they were as white as her white cheeks. He saw every detail of her; long afterward he could even recall the way her hair looked in the cross lights from the lamp and the fire, and the rosy tint the firelight made on her gray gown.

Yet it was for only a glance that his eyes rested upon her. He strode into the room and faced the woman. Her tirade did not cease for a moment, but directed itself at him.

"Yes," she cried, waving a fist toward him, "yes, there you are—it's you I come to see! You—you—you got my Joe took up, you did, atop of all the rest you done to us! My Joe—an' he never done it! It was a plant, and I guess *you* know who done it, you Hiram A. Ward! But it wasn't my Joe! He don't know a thing about dynamite, an' he wouldn't harm a baby, he wouldn't! And now you've got him locked up, put all the blame on him, makin' out he's all but a murderer—and he never done it!"

Mr. Ward stood close in front of her, looking at her. Once or twice she met his eyes, defiantly; yet he did not speak, only looked and looked, from under his brows. Many a man had quailed before that look. The woman began to whimper.

"I ain't afraid of you," she cried, and lifted a corner of the baby's shawl to her eyes. "I just come to beg you for Joe. He never done it. He's afraid of dynamite, Joe is, and always was. And look at them little children! How're they going to live, if Joe's locked up?"

Her words trailed off into incoherent sounds of sobs and broken syllables. Ward turned away, looked at the children, who, their hunger satisfied, were staring at him with round eyes wherein sleep fought with awe and curiosity. He looked at Carey; she had not moved, her expression had not altered. He turned back to the woman.

"Get out of here!" he said. "And I advise you to get out quick."

The woman began to speak again, but a wordless exclamation from Ward stopped her. Somehow she got the children together; but at the door her courage—or fury—flared up once more. Hiram was closely following her. She turned, and looked up into his face, her own shamelessly working, hideous with the marks of old emotions.

"Oh, sir," she whined, "won't you have pity on Joe and let him out of it? Won't you——"

"Get out of here!" said Hiram. His tone was lower than usual, but the words came out as if impelled by a force which could not much longer be held in restraint.

Cowering now, the woman turned, dragging one child by the hand, the other huddling close to her. The baby began to wail, and the mother did not hear the gasping sound in the room she had just left.

But Hiram heard. His heart was so attuned that he would have heard that faint sound through any babel, as a dog hears its master's low-spoken word through the chatter of a roomful. Yet before she could turn she was at his side, her two hands on his arm, her eyes raised to his. He understood. She was pleading for the viper that had stung her.

He half turned, so that for an instant he could touch her hands, put them back against her heart. Then he followed the woman, who was fumbling at the front door.

"Here," he said, putting something into her hand that he had taken from his own pocket. "Here! Take it—from the young lady. And Joe shall have a fair trial. I can not do more than that. But my own lawyers shall do their best for him."

The woman began to sob—great gasping

sobs, that made words impossible, and that shook the crying baby into renewed shrieking of terror. Ward opened the door.

When he came back, he found Carey standing where he had left her.

"Carey!" he said, in a low tone, beseechingly. Slowly she looked up at him.

"It isn't true, is it?" she asked. And as Hiram hesitated, she repeated, "Oh, it isn't true?"

He did not dare to question her, lest he should recall whatever it was she had heard. He could guess what the horrid details might be, for he knew the woman's class, knew what she might be capable of under strong emotion. He feared anything, everything; most of all he feared to disclose his own fear, lest he emphasize the horror of it all. Yet he must reply.

"My dear," he said, "how can we tell whether it is true or not? So much is true! The man was seen coming out of the yard, certainty."

He had guessed wrongly. What had struck horror to her soul was not the fact of the un-

known Joe's arrest, nor what he had done, nor the children in need; it was the vituperation, the vileness the woman had thrown at her, the things half-understood, which yet touched to loathing her woman's instinct, the things she had heard about himself. At Hiram's words she threw her head back, in a gesture of despair. He put his hands out toward her, but she shrank away.

"Carey!" he cried again; but she slid past him.

"I can't talk—any more—to-night!" she gasped. And Hiram had to watch her go upstairs, slowly, step by step, as if she were carrying a great weight with her.

THE exquisite tenderness of a maid for a babe; the gentle pity in the eyes of a nun; the helping hand of the pure in heart for the heart which has fallen low—think, kind reader, think of what they are! For are they not Words of the Everlasting Love made manifest?

WHEN Kate Wendell came down the next morning to a late breakfast—her first in weeks—Mr. Ward had long departed, and only Williamson was there to keep her company, having just arrived on the midnight train from the capitol. Kate had come home in the early morning hours, to find the house in its usual quiet; she had not gone to Carey's room until this morning, when she found her awake and feverish, staring with plaintive eyes at the foot of the bed, quite willing to have her breakfast sent up, not quite so willing, it seemed, to eat it when it came. To Kate's anxious questioning she had no answers.

Nor did Scott—usually omniscient—have any reason to offer for the girl's illness, if such it were; and Williamson, of course, knew nothing.

"It may be a cold coming on, Miss," Scott suggested, and added, "A little belladonna at the beginning, Miss——"

Williamson, too, grasped at that explanation. "Sure! Bound to be a cold. Never knew such weather. Abominable."

But Kate scoffed. "A cold! Nonsense! Not all the colds in the world would give her that look in her eyes, nor make her so unnaturally quiet. I tell you, something has happened, something has hurt that child."

She glared fiercely at Williamson, not in the least caring that he was as obviously in a bad humor.

"Well, it's your own bloomin' fault if it has!" said he, standing in front of her and glaring back, his hands in his pockets, feet apart. "What the deuce do you want to go traipsing over the town for, hobnobbing with a lot of hoodlums, egging them on to Heaven knows what? Why can't you be satisfied to behave like a lady, and stay home where you belong?"

Kate fairly blazed with fury. "'Behave like a lady'!" she quoted. "That's the old, old story —we can't be women, and play a woman's part, and still be ladies! I should like to know what it is—being a lady—if it isn't helping others,

giving of yourself and what you have! And as for hoodlums—they are more polite than you are, Mr. Williamson!"

"Oh, hang it all, Kate, I don't mean to be a beast! You know I don't! But when I think of Carey's possibly having run into some kind of danger, or had something happen to her, or—or being ill—*you* know how it is with me, Kate!"

"Well, I'm in love with her too, for that matter. But I've got work to do; I can't stay home just to look after Carey. She's a grown woman, isn't she?"

"She's a saint—a flower—a breath of wind in a desert—a 'sunshine in a shady place'—a ——"

After all, it was at breakfast, and he was saying these things about another woman; perhaps Kate's impatience was excusable.

"You idiot!" she remarked; and propping a newspaper up in front of her plate returned to her bacon and coffee.

Yet through all the day that followed she could not forget that slim figure in bed, with

the black curls over the pillow, and the blue eyes looking out through pain; and when her anxiety brought her home somewhat earlier than usual it was to find a white wraith of a girl whose eyes still held that look of a wounded thing, who spoke but seldom and ate almost nothing at all. Kate could only watch and Williamson could only secretly fume and rage at the enigma; Mr. Ward did not come home to dinner; and it was not until the next morning that Kate reached a solution of the puzzle, when Ward told her of the visit of the dynamiter's wife. Yet neither guessed even a small part of what the wretched woman had said.

As for Carey—the shock of knowledge had been great, yet that was not what hurt most. She had found many things in the world different from what she had foreseen, many more wonderful than anything she had imagined; it was not so strange to find wickedness, too; it was only a part of the marvel. What hurt most was that the wickedness should be there, and her friends be doing nothing—as she believed—to alleviate the suffering of it all. At

home, in Aunt Crishy's youth, when any of the people on "the place" were sick, the ladies tended them. When any of the negroes were bad, the gentlemen attended to them, too, in ways suitable if painful. Illness and badness there had to be, doubtless. Her mind had not taken in the fulness of the woman's vileness; and the sum of wickedness, the meaning of the angry passions back of the dynamiting, were too far outside of Carey's world—the old world and the new one—to be understood at once. But the part of it that she did understand was crushing enough. And there was something more. The woman had said things about Mr. Ward. She had said them with a snarl, with a leer, with a look of vindictive fury—and they had sounded horridly. Much of it remained, as far as Carey's understanding went, as if she had spoken a foreign tongue. But the intention behind the words, the fact that she was saying dreadful things about him—*that* Carey understood, as much by the wretched creature's expression and tone as by her words. But there were also some other things which she

heard in another way, heard with understanding, with all the shock that even that revengeful fury of a woman could have desired. Mr. Ward was cruel, and he was hard; he drove the poor, denied them bread for their mouths and shoes for their feet. Carey's literal mind made a picture of it, and her heart ached all night with that vision of thousands wandering actually barefoot over the wintry pavements and holding out their hands for bread. Toward an understanding of the other horror, the one which she understood only so far as the woman's tones and looks could make her understand, her mind groped as a child's does toward the evil which has not before come into its consciousness. It weighed upon her, like a demon in a nightmare. . . .

So she had lain awake with staring eyes until a resolution came to her. For Mr. Ward's part of it—well, some day she would ask him for the truth, and he would tell her, because gentlemen always told the truth. Until then she would put the memory of those insinuations, whatever they meant, out of her

thoughts, as far as she could. But for the rest —she had only one standard, our Carey, and what else should she follow? What would Aunt Belinda have done, or Aunt Crishy, if word had come to them of suffering and starvation near by?

So on the second day after the woman's visit Carey arose, and dressed, and went down to dinner. When they were at last upstairs for the night, she knocked at the door of Kate's room, and went in.

Kate kissed her, and spoke—as all of them did, in that house—as if to a beloved child; but even at the moment she realized that this Carey was not a child, but a woman on whose heart had fallen the accolade of pain.

"Come, dear," she said, drawing the girl down beside her to a seat on a couch, "tell me all about it! Did that horrid woman frighten you?"

"No. She was too unhappy to frighten me. And the little children were—hungry. Oh, Kate, are many people hungry? Are they cold? Is it true?"

"That has always been true, Carey. I'm afraid it always will be."

"Kate—it came to me last night—do you go away every day to help those poor people? Is that what you call your work?"

It was hard to leave altogether that idea of her being no more than a child. "Yes," Kate answered.

"How do you help them, Kate dear?"

Kate told her—both of the part she played, and something of what they were trying to gain by their strike—"And we will win!" she cried, at last. "We will *force* the mill-owners to give us our *right* to be heard, to be recognised! We will *force* them to it!"

Carey's eyes still were troubled. "I don't understand that way!" she said. "Why don't you ask them to? Why don't you make them *love* those poor people? If they *love* them, they will listen! If they *love* them, they will give them *anything,* won't they?"

"Oh, my child! You certainly *don't* understand! 'Love them'!"

Carey shook her head, and pondered; then

she said, "Kate, I want to go with you to help them!"

"Darling!" said Kate, and bent closer to kiss her again. "Perhaps you may—we shall see, in the morning!"

But Kate had no intention of exposing Carey to the rough-and-tumble of the streets, to the looks of the surly groups on the corners, to the wildness or bitterness of the women strikers who crowded her own office.

The girl's two sleepless nights demanded repayment; when Carey awoke the next morning Kate and the two men had long been gone from the house. It was a disappointment, but her resolve did not lessen. Mrs. Boyne had been good to her—perhaps Mrs. Boyne would go with her.

She dressed in her street things, put her little bead purse in her muff, and went down stairs. But Scott, whom nothing escaped for long, was perfectly aware of the state of affairs. As a matter of fact, he knew more than any of the others, as often happens in the case of the observant bystander. Therefore Scott

chanced to come out of the dining-room as Carey came down to the hall. When she walked toward the front door, he also stepped toward it.

"Shall I order the motor, Miss?" he asked, respectfully, yet with that indefinable softening of the tone which no masculine creature on earth could fail to use toward Carey.

"No, I thank you, Scott," she said. "I—I am just—going out."

"Yes, Miss! Quite so, Miss! But if I may make so bold as to say so, Miss, I think it would be better for you not to go out alone, Miss."

She looked at him, unoffended, but with wide-opened eyes. "Why?"

Scott's hand went to his mouth. He became somewhat embarrassed. "Well, Miss, it—if you please, Miss, it—it is not as you might say—er—er——" Scott's courage failed him, before those wondering eyes, and he weakened. He wanted to say, "It is not *done,* Miss;" as it was, he ended weakly, "It is not considered—er—safe, Miss!"

Carey laughed a little. "Oh, you good

Scott! Do you think I'll fall down, or let myself be run over, or get lost? Why, I am only going to Mrs. Boyne's—at first."

Scott's expression changed to one of relief. "Yes, Miss. 'K you!" he murmured, as he opened the door.

But Mrs. Boyne's maid reported that the lady had one of her headaches, and begged to be excused. So Carey turned away, wondering a little what she should do, yet still determined; then she thought herself favored by fortune, for the eldest Miss Mason was across the street. She smiled somewhat constrainedly when Carey joined her.

Miss Mason was small and trim in figure, small and neat in features, and small—and small—in mind. She was possessed of that sort of curiosity which makes a boy torture a cat to see what it will do, which examines every gift for the invisible string tied to it, which looks for the mold beneath the roots of every flower. And she was forty.

"You are looking pale," she said, in reply to Carey's greeting, as they walked on together

toward the lower part of the city. "Doesn't the change from the country agree with you?" And before Carey could reply, she asked, again, "You did come from the country, didn't you?"

"I came from Millwood, you know. Naturally—being a Wethersbee."

Carey had replied in all innocence, but Miss Mason flushed angrily.

"Ah!" she said, mentally vowing to erase that score against herself before long. "And did you go out a great deal—at Millwood?"

Carey smiled. She knew no meaning for the phrase except its literal one. "Of co'se!" she said. "There was nothing else to do!"

Miss Mason bit her lip, and her flush deepened. She changed the subject. "I saw you coming from Mrs. Boyne's," she said. "I suppose you are lonely, now that Kate is picketing? But—you surely don't see very much of Mrs. Boyne, do you?"

"She is very good," replied Carey. "But to-

day—she had one of her headaches. I am so sorry."

"I think she must be having headache a good deal, these days! It's rather hard on her, you know!"

True to her standard, Carey asked no question; but the other went on. "Of course you know how it is between her and Mr. Ward. They were all but engaged; probably were engaged, privately. Then—well, then the gentleman became otherwise occupied. All Hilton is wondering!"

Carey was wondering, too; but something seemed to rise in her throat, and she could not speak. "Yet, after all, Jessica should have known what to expect! As if Hiram Ward ever really cared for any one but himself! It's her own fault if she's set people talking! But of course people will talk any how! There's no limit to how they will talk—about any one. I often say that it's quite absurd. As if there could have been any harm, for example, in your driving to and from the mill every day with Mr. Ward, or as if there could be any

reason in—well, in the young men's hanging around you the way they do. Quite absurd, I always say!"

Carey paused; her heart seemed to quiver, and then be still for the space of a beat. It was the first time that the scorpion tongue of gossip had touched her. She grew very pale.

But there was in her blood that latent quality which, when it has passed through many generations, makes it possible for its possessor to face the guns, whatever they may be. Miss Mason's satisfaction was less than she had foreseen. Carey turned to her with lips, at least, that smiled.

"I think there are a great many things that are absurd," she said. "And I think I must leave you here, at this corner; we can scarcely be going the same way."

And Miss Mason was not pale for some time thereafter. But Carey walked as if in a dream or a nightmare. She was scarcely thinking; she seemed to be treading her way through a maze of disillusion. She had expected so much of the world—and what had she found? Aunt

Crishy had told her about visits, and dances, and lovers and serenades; those were what she had come seeking. But what had she found? Oh, wonders, yes, far beyond imagining! And beauty, great treasure-houses full of it; beauty on the streets, in the shops, in the parks. Good times she had found, dances enough, and charming young men who sent her flowers, and crowded after her, and whispered delightful, silly things about her blue-black hair and her blue eyes. But the world held more than all that. How much more, she was finding out every day, every hour.

It was the first time she had been alone on the streets, almost the first time she had been there afoot. One or two people that she knew passed her, and bowed; but she did not see them. Instead, she saw the bitter, ugly face of a woman, the hands of little children reaching out for food, the envy and unsatisfied desire in the eyes of those girls at the looms; she heard their voices as they rose above the noise of the spindles; and more than all else, she saw the thin quiet face of a man, a man whose eyes saw

everything and whose lips drew downward when he smiled. . . . They called him hard, and cruel . . . she remembered the look in his eyes when he came back from the hall a night or two before, and the sound of his voice when he had spoken her name. . . . They said—she shivered—Miss Mason said that Mrs. Boyne . . . and that Mr. Ward never cared. . . .

She walked on more quickly. She had come at last to that lower part of the town through which the sluggish river wound its way among the vast brick mills, silent now, and somehow giving the effect of its being Sunday. On every street corner there were groups of lounging men who eyed her with suspicion or surliness or else leered at her in a way which they meant to be offensive, but which she did not really see at all. There were girls, too, standing here and there, usually in pairs; and presently one of these came and stood in front of her.

It was the spindle-girl with whom she had spoken in the Ward mill. Each recognized the other.

"Gee!" said the girl. "Ain't you lost your way?"

Carey shook her head. "I am glad it is you," she said. "You told me about your father being sick, and your brothers and sisters with their mouths open and no shoes to their feet. So—I've come to help."

It was not only the girl's brothers and sisters who had their mouths open; it must have been a family characteristic. "What d'yer think o' that!" she remarked. "Can yer beat it?"

Carey had drawn the beaded purse from her muff, and opened it. Now she put something into the girl's hand. "That is for you," she said. "You must take it. You can buy a great deal with money."

She passed on, more swiftly now, as if she had found what she was looking for. The girl stared after her, and her companion joined her.

"What'd she give yer? Who was it?" she asked.

The spindle-girl looked at the other, then opened her hand. She unfolded the piece of

paper. It was a gold certificate for one hundred dollars.

With an exclamation she started down the street. But at the corner she paused; Carey was not in sight.

"Great day in the mornin'!" said she to her companion.

"Some rich swell excaped from a 'sylum. You should worry!"

"Not much it ain't," said the spindle-girl. "I know who that is—an' I got somethin' better to do'n to be hangin' around here. Ta-ta!"

Whereupon this spirited member of the family who kept their mouths open ran off, and kept on running, through narrow alleys and other devious short-cuts, in the direction of the Ward mill. She waved to a picket on duty half a block from the big gate.

"It's all right, Mag! I ain't no scab!" she called out; and then, panting but unafraid, she opened the door of the mill office.

The office of the Ward mill, at other times, had been as busy as those other rooms where the spindles rattled; now it was quiet, and the

outer room was deserted. The wooden door of Mr. Ward's private office was closed; at any other time it would have required more courage than the girl possessed so much as to knock at that door; now she opened it unceremoniously and went inside.

"I want to see the old man!" she gasped, leaning against the wall, still panting from her race through the streets.

Two men were in the room. One was Harrison, the superintendent; he recognized the girl, and sprang to his feet with an angry exclamation. The other only turned in his chair, yet it was he that spoke.

"Well, my girl," he said, "what's up?"

"Oh, Mr. Williamson, sir," she panted, ignoring Harrison, "I want to see the old—Mr. Ward, sir! I—look!"

She bent forward and dropped something on the table in front of Williamson. It was a one-hundred-dollar bill.

"Whew!" said Williamson. "You found it, and want to return it to Mr. Ward—is that it?"

"No, sir! She give it to me! The young

lady that came to the mill with'm. She came along an' said some'n' about me brothers and sisters a-havin' their mouths open, and give me that. She—oh, sir, she hadn't oughter be down here! Not by herself, sir!"

Williamson sprang to his feet with an exclamation of two words—which may have been a prayer. "Here? Down here? By herself?"

The girl nodded vigourously. "An' it ain't no *time* for the likes of her to be down here, neither," she said.

Williamson had grown very white. "Come!" he said, and the two went out together.

It was dusk when he found her, with the aid of the spindle-girl. It was really by her bounty that they traced her. She had given it freely; and one honest soul, early in the day, had explained to her that the yellow bills and gold coins might be changed for others which would go further; so that, as the number of her gifts increased, the trail lengthened. They were the longest hours Williamson had ever spent. He would have set Ward, also, on the trail, if it had not been that it was Ward's turn to spend

the day at the capitol; and he was too angry with Kate for not, as he told himself, staying at home where she belonged, to take her into his confidence. Through his anxiety it seemed to him that Carey was all his, that what evil befell her must strike at his heart alone. He did not want any one else to search for her. He had, for an early moment, thought of the police; but the spindle-girl had warned him against that.

"It's dollars to doughnuts we'd never find her, if you turn the cops loose on the chase," she said. "You jest let me tell the other girls —that's the best way."

The end proved her right; it was another girl who came running up to them at last with the first definite tidings.

"Say, de young lady's up to Mame Kennedy's, rockin' de baby!" she announced; and there at last they found her.

It was in a sordid house on an evil street; yet she had passed safely through it. Mame Kennedy—poor Mame Kennedy—was crouching on the threshold of her own door; she rose

when the spindle-girl spoke to her, and gave Williamson's back a surly look.

"Well," she said, "I didn't ast her to come in, nor yet to hold the baby—an' Mike ain't comin' home no more, anyhow. But say, who are you, to turn up your nose at people?"

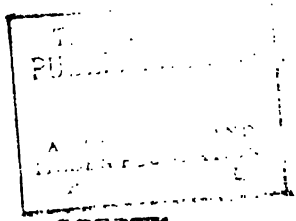
And having so spoken, she and the spindle-girl passed out of this history forever.

It was a dirty room, with a few pieces of furniture that bore evidences of having passed through many successive households, coming down the scale a step or two with each change of ownership. There was a rusty stove with a greasy frying pan upon it, there were unwashed dishes on the table, a mass of soiled quilts on the bed in the corner; but beside the table, on a low chair that had half of one rocker gone, bending over a sleeping baby on her lap, was Carey.

Williamson looked; he could not speak.

She lifted her eyes—he could see how weary their lids were, how dark the shadows lay on her cheeks. She looked at him a moment as if

Bending over a sleeping baby on her lap, was Carey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she did not know him or perhaps as if she were not surprised at his being there. Then she touched her lips with her fingers, slowly lifted the sleeping child, and carried it across the room to the bed. When she had laid it there she came back, looked up into Williamson's face, held out her hand, and said,

"Take me home. I am so tired."

His face quivered; but he took her hand, and led her out of the room, down the stairs, out of the evil street. When they had come up the hill to the main street he signaled to a passing cab, and as they whirled swiftly toward home he turned to her.

"Carey! Why did you go out alone?"

"I wanted to help the poor," she said.

"But alone? Don't you know what danger you were in?" Then he remembered, and added, "But of course you would not know!"

"I know now," she said. "There were times when I was afraid."

"Carey!" he cried at that, taking one of her hands. "What have you seen to-day, what have you heard? Oh, my dear!"

She leaned back and closed her eyes; her hand, in his, was as cold and quiet as if there were no pulse of life in it. "I think I have seen all the misery in all the whole world," she said.

For a moment he looked at her in silence; then he was moved by a fierce longing to protect her, to cherish her, an irresistible desire to make her look at him, to watch her eyes lose some of their pain for that which he craved to see in them. He bent closer.

"Carey!" he cried. "Carey, I can't bear to have you say that! I can't bear the idea of your knowing what misery means!"

She opened her eyes to look at him, and they were full of tears.

"Carey! Carey, don't! My darling, my darling! I love you so! You shall never see any more of those horrors, never! It kills me to see you suffering! Carey!"

"Dear Bob," she murmured, but as if her thoughts were in another world.

"Carey! Don't you understand? Don't you hear me? I love you, I love you, I love you!"

Now her eyes were opened, her lips parted. Now she was looking at him, but with a look that was fear, and dismay, and protest.

He bent closer, but she put her hand between his face and her own.

"No, no!" she cried. "Bob! No!"

He laughed. "My darling! You are not afraid of me! I love you, Carey—I want to take care of you all your life, and make you happy, and—and—love you!"

She had freed her other hand, and now had hidden her face in her palms, and was sobbing,

"Oh, don't! Oh, don't!"

"I won't, then, not now! Don't cry—I can't bear to have you cry! Come, I will not say another word—now! Carey! Forgive me for frightening you—I wouldn't for all the world, dear. And see—here we are, at the house!"

And in another moment, indeed, the cab had stopped, a very alarmed Scott had run down the steps and across the pavement to open the door; in just another moment Carey and Williamson were in the hall.

Kate met them and Carey threw herself into the other woman's arms, still sobbing; while Mrs. Wendell, a person of fluttering shawls and frightened questions, was bending over the banisters from above.

HAVE you ever watched on some rock-bound coast the beams of a light pierce a fog? Have you ever been led, through the night, by the pale yellow glow of a lantern, flinging fantastic gleams and patterns of shadow across the roadside? Have you never followed a beckoning hand? And reader, good reader, have you never responded to that still, small voice within you which yet speaks, when it will, more insistently than any other, whose dictates you must obey, for whose sake you would live, at whose call you would die—must die—if need be?

ALL the way home on the train, all during the elaborately savorless dinner of the dining-car, Mr. Ward was wondering whether she would be waiting for him in the library. A few short weeks ago, and he would have raged—and not only inwardly raged—at the mere thought of a feminine invasion of that sacred room of his; yet here he was looking forward with longing, with hope, almost with craving, to finding a girl awaiting him there on his return! He had never asked himself the significance of this new longing; like most men who escape the deeper emotional experiences until after thirty, he was shy of investigating the secret places of his heart; if he was afraid of signs of affection in others, he was rather ashamed of them in himself. Hiram A. Ward knew a great deal about many things, but he had yet to learn that there are only a few of us who can hope altogether to escape a reckoning with our own souls—a reckoning where Love sits as judge and Con-

science as jury. For the present he was content to drift with the current, not asking whither it would bear him.

It was true that she was waiting for him, as he had hoped. Kate was off at a night conference of the strikers; Mrs. Wendell had gone to bed to nurse her nerves, after her fright of the afternoon over Carey's prolonged absence; and Williamson, in alternate states of longing to kick himself for having alarmed Carey with his premature love-making and satisfaction at having openly declared himself, had gone to his club for the first time in weeks, there to seek whatever it had to offer by way of solace.

Hiram found her, as he had dreamed of finding her, in the big chair in front of the fire. If his heart beat a little faster when she stood up to greet him, he fortified himself with a fine assumption of a grandfatherly manner.

"Well, little girl!" he said, cheerfully.

But he was all unprepared for what followed. She stood for a moment looking at

him; then she had crossed the space between them as if it did not exist, and had thrown herself upon him, sobbing, clasping him with frightened hands—oh, he knew them for frightened hands, even through his gladness at their touching him. He put his arms around her, carried her back to the big chair, seated her there, bent over her—and all the while his heart was beating like a school-boy's, all the while he knew that she would never have come to him in that way if he were not her "nicest old gentleman in the world!"

"My dear!" he said; and kept saying, over and over, bewildered, pitying, pleading, "My dear! My dear!"

And presently, between his helpless "my dears" and his awkward pats and his sympathy, she grew quieter.

"Oh, tell me," she cried, coherent at last, grasping one of his hands in both of hers, and looking up at him, unconscious as a child of her teary eyes and gasping breath, "tell me! Is all the world like that? I have seen—such dreadful things, and heard—worse things! I wanted

to help them—I wanted to give them things. So I went there—I walked, oh, so far! And——"

"What's that? You walked? When? Where?"

"To-day. I was going to ask Mrs. Boyne to go with me, but she had one of her headaches, you know. So I went by myself. It was far—and the streets are so full of people, and they crowd, and stare. I think the world must be far, far larger than I thought—there are so *many* people! But after a while I found the mills, and where the poor live. I wanted to help them, you know, so I gave them money——"

"You——"

She nodded. "Yes, I gave them money. The first one I gave money to was the girl I talked to in your mill, you know, the one who has all the little brothers and sisters with their mouths open. Then I went on, and gave other people money. A good old woman told me how I could get smaller money for my big ones and make it go farther; so I did. But

after a while people began to come running after me, asking me to give them some too; and—and then—a man—came up to me, and—oh! he put his face close to me, and said something. . . . I think he meant to be rude; and his breath . . . oh! He frightened me. So I ran and ran, and when I stopped running away from him my purse was gone!"

"What else?" Poor Mr. Ward! This was scarcely the home-coming he had pictured!

She pressed her hands to her cheeks. "Oh! I was so frightened! They said such strange things to me, some of them, and laughed—not happy laughs! Not—not good laughs! I wanted to find my way home, but I couldn't. I went on and on; and then I heard a baby crying, so I went into that house, and put the baby to sleep. A woman came—it may have been the baby's mother, but I am not sure, because she did not seem to want to take the baby in her arms. I think mothers must always want that, don't you? When she saw me holding the baby she just stood in the door, and would not let any one come into the room. When other

women came to the door, and men, she drove them away—oh, she said horrible things to them. Until Bob came."

"Williamson came—there?"

She nodded. "The girl who ran away, the first girl I gave money to, brought him, I think. And he brought me home. I was—so tired."

Ward said nothing, but stood looking down at her, his face drawn and gray-white. He realised to the utmost the impulse which had sent her forth on her errand of ministration, and he realized with all the force of a highly-trained imagination just what were the perils and dangers she had passed through. One shade less of purity, one less degree of innocence and trustfulness, and he shuddered at the thought of what might have befallen her. She *had* come through, she was safe here with him, and her eyes held no shock of pain for herself, no memory of anything that had hurt herself. Yet there was pain enough; and the sight of it swept him with shame. He was thinking of those earlier words of hers—"A

gentleman is always ready and willing to defend a lady, a woman, all women." "You need never be afraid of anything, not of anything at all, when there is a gentleman to protect you." . . . How had he protected her, how had he shielded her, how had he kept from her this useless knowledge of the side of life to which she had been a stranger in that far stronghold of her Virginia home? Williamson had been right—she should have been shielded forever from the knowledge which is disillusion, as a jewel is kept from the mire.

She began to speak again, and her voice was low, as if weighted with pain and protest.

"I have been thinking—thinking. It was foolish of me to suppose that *I* could help them —those poor people. I am young and foolish, I don't know anything about their needs. I don't think I know very much about anything at all! I have already given them all my money—except a few of the pretty gold ones I kept to look at. I gave and gave—and it did not seem to help! But——" Oh! the eyes of faith that she turned up to him!—"but *you* can

help! You are wise, and old, and great! *You* can help!"

"My dear! What can I do?"

"This strike—they say it causes misery! You can help that, can't you? You can give them what they want!"

"They want preposterous things!"

"You can give them what they want!"

Those eyes, where hope and faith had banished the memory of pain!

"My dear!" he said. "My dear! What can I say to you? It is a hard old world you've come to—yet it is the same one you knew there at home in your quiet Millwood! It is not new, all this that you have discovered. It has always been so; I'm afraid nothing we can do would change it. You have seen that for yourself—though I wish to heaven that you had not!"

"Don't you *want* to help them?"

What would Hiram A. Ward have replied, had any one else asked that direct question?

"What we want, my dear, and what we can do are not always related, in this old world!"

he told her. "As for what we want . . ." he turned away, rested his arm upon the mantel, and bent his head toward the fire.

What he wanted—what he wanted, indeed! Was it not becoming more plain to him, moment by moment, what he wanted?

He could hear her breathing, he could hear her move. He knew that she was watching him, but he was not going to trust himself to look any longer into those eyes of cavalier's blue. His life-long instinct of seeking safety from such wiles had by no means forsaken him yet!

Then he heard a long, indrawn breath that was half a sob. "O-o-oh! Why do you say such things? You *are* good. I *know*. But I wish you would not talk that way, because—because it makes people think you are what that dreadful woman said you were."

She paused.

"Well, what did she say I was?" he asked.

The memory of those words swept back to her in a flood of dismay and doubt. "But it is not true!" she cried.

"It probably is," said he, from the depths of his bitterness.

"That you are bad, wicked, selfish? That you starve the poor, and love no one but yourself, and—and——"

"It probably is," he said again. "There is probably nothing bad that any one could say about me that is not—true enough."

It seemed a long while before she moved, yet it may have been only a moment. Then she came quite close to him, and touched him upon the arm. "Then—I will help *you,*" she said. "Tell me how!"

For the space of a second or two Mr. Ward thought his heart stood still; then the room seemed to swirl around him. Poor Hiram A. Ward, with his might and his millions, and his overwhelming sense of unworthiness before this slip of an innocent girl whom he was afraid to love, and who wanted to help him! Afraid to love, because never in all his selfish life had he loved anything; and love is a mighty leveler and humbler of the spirit of the proud! Afraid to love, because in his humility he be-

lieved he knew what a mere shadow of all he craved she would have to give him—him, her "nicest old gentleman in the world"! Afraid to love, lest he who had hitherto bought whatever he wanted, might now find his dearest longing beyond price, beyond purchase! Poor Hiram A. Ward!

He turned and put his hands on her arms; at the look on his face she might very well have thought of him as that old, old gentleman.

"My dear, my dear," he said, not trusting his voice to speak loudly, "we have had quite a talk, haven't we? Would you mind leaving me now?"

He saw the hurt look come into her eyes in place of that exquisite trust and pity. "But why?" she asked. "Why?"

And as she looked she saw and half understood; she saw the hunger of a man for the one maid in the world; she understood as much as she might of what was moving him, and herself trembled. . . .

She drew back, hid her face in her hands. . . .

Then, at the sound of an opening door, she looked up. He was gone. . . .

The clock in the hall struck nine. It had been less than an hour since he came in, and her world had rocked on its foundations, and was changed for all time. . . .

There was a sound in the hall, and Scott spoke from the doorway.

"Mrs. Boyne, Miss!"

With a start she remembered. They were to go to a dance that night, Mrs. Boyne as chaperone. With an undefined, quick feeling that she did not want Mrs. Boyne to come into the library—whose air must still be vibrant with so many emotions—she went quickly across the hall to the drawing-room.

"My dear child, you are not dressed!" the lady cried at sight of her.

"Please—you must excuse me—I cannot go to-night—I am sorry . . ."

Now, Mrs. Boyne had entered the front door just in time to catch a glimpse past Scott's stalwart shoulder of Hiram Ward disappear-

ing into the regions at the back of his house. She was sure that he must have heard her voice, yet he had hastened away. She was sure, too, that she had not been mistaken in thinking that he had come from the library—and this girl had come from the library, too, white and trembling. Mrs. Boyne's headache had left her nerves shaken; now her self-control took wings unto itself and flew away. She came up to Carey, looked at her, smiled.

"My dear child," she drawled, "aren't you going rather too far? I'm not pretending to criticise the taste or—or morality of it, but—merely the skill! Don't you think you are making a mistake in crowding him? You came by night, in a fetching make-up and an air of wonderful innocence, and got yourself installed here; *that* was clever enough! Of course Hiram must have known that it was a scheme, a little plan to capture him—but it was clever and he admires cleverness. But aren't you spoiling it now by following him up too closely, pressing him too far?"

At first Carey shrank away as if from a

lash; but then she straightened and returned look for look.

"Will you please say just what you mean?" she asked.

Mrs. Boyne laughed and tapped her lightly on the cheek. "You're a wonderful little actress," she said.

She gathered her evening cloak about her and looked down at Carey with lips that smiled and eyes that taunted. "Yes, a really wonderful little actress! You have fooled all of Hilton, even dear Kate and her mother—and Kate is usually 'wise' to most things! At first"—she laughed and moved toward the door—"at first you almost fooled me!"

In the doorway she turned. "But don't for a moment let yourself suppose that you have really fooled Hiram. You may take it from me that he is only playing your game. He knew from the first that your arrival was only a clever scheme to get into his house, that your airs of innocence are only so many sweet little wiles for attracting him. So take my advice, my dear, and don't overdo it! Don't pursue

him too warmly! Don't imagine you can make him really fall in love with you!" From the hall she called back, "Good-by, dear! Sorry you're not up to the dance to-night!" and departed, taking with her the feeling that her evening had not been altogether wasted.

READER, have you ever plucked a rose, and found a thorn? Have you ever looked for joy, and found sorrow? You have? Ah, who has not!

"WHERE in thunder is Hiram?" demanded Bob Williamson, coming into the dining-room as Kate was drinking her second matutinal cup of coffee.

She waved her hand at him. "Let sleeping dogs lie," she advised. "He's sure to be in an abominable humor after a day at the capital and dinner on the dining-car."

Williamson whistled. "You haven't heard the news, then?" he asked.

"What news?" Kate returned, with an air of small concern.

"Strike's off."

She set her cup down and stared at him. "Off where?" she asked.

He grinned. "Off! Over! Gone! Vamoosed!"

"You're dreaming," said Kate.

"I don't think I am,' said he. "I've just been talking to Harrison over the 'phone. He had a message for Hiram to the effect that it

would not be possible to get up power enough to start the looms until noon. I asked him what the dickens he was talking about, and he said he'd be various things if *he* knew; that he had received orders this morning that the strike was over."

Bob and Kate stared at each other for a moment, then once more he demanded, *"Where* is Hiram?"

But Kate replied only by rushing out of the room; in a moment her voice could have been heard at the telephone, and in a short while she was back again, a picture of bewildered amazement.

"It's true!" she said. "They say at headquarters that Hiram has given in—says he'll recognise the union, keep union shop, and has given five thousand dollars for the relief of suffering, provided his name's not published. It's the most amazing thing I ever heard in my life!"

"It's not true," said Williamson. "You know Hiram! I know Hiram! You know and I know that Hiram wouldn't do that!

Somebody's put up a joke on your headquarters, that's what! On Harrison, too!"

His conclusions seemed more reasonable than the truth; they looked at each other in silence. After a moment Scott, who had been standing near the pantry door, stepped forward.

"If you please, Mr. Williamson, sir," said he, "Mr. Ward went out this morning quite early, sir, seven o'clock, I should say. He asked me to say, sir, as how you would probably be needed at the mill as the mill would—er—resume work this morning, sir. 'K you!"

"By—the—Lord Harry!" said Williamson, when this intelligence had pierced his amazement. Then he asked, "Scott, did Mr. Ward seem—er—any ways—er—*you* know, Scott! Did he?"

"No, sir," replied Scott. "Not at all, sir. Quite the contrary, sir. When Mr. Ward is not—feeling very well, sir, he's usually what you might call—well, sir—what you might call——"

"Cross," Kate suggested.

"Yes, Miss! Quite so, Miss," Scott acknowledged. "But this morning, sir, Mr. Ward came downstairs—er—singing, sir!"

"Singing!" cried Williamson; and Kate echoed, "Singing!"

"Yes, Miss," Scott affirmed. "That is, Mr. Ward—er— "

Scott looked confused. Kate came again to the rescue.

"*Thought* he was singing, Scott?"

"Quite so, Miss," Scott looked relieved. "It was one of the German h'operas he was a-singing of, Miss—Lohengrin, I think it were, Miss."

Williamson burst into a laugh, then grew unnaturally serious. "Oh, poor devil!" he cried. "He's gone off his head!"

"Toast or muffins, sir?" asked Scott. His message delivered, he was once more only the butler.

But both toast and muffins were slighted that morning; Williamson hastily swallowed some coffee and joined Kate as she was going out of the door. By the time they had reached

the lower part of the town there were evidences enough that the strike was over. No longer were there surly groups on the corners; and strike headquarters, where Williamson parted from Kate, was deserted except for an idle stenographer and the walking delegate from the union, who was looking rather depressed. Kate could gather no fuller information, however, than that the committee of strikers who had gone from last night's meeting to interview Hiram, expecting a battle of sorts, had been met, instead, with the information that Mr. Ward would yield to the strikers' demands; and their amazement had been completed and all their distrust ended by Ward's contribution to the needs of the women and children who had suffered during the past weeks. They grinned rather foolishly when they told Kate about it; and when they departed Kate herself remarked to the stenographer,

"I feel like an ostrich feather that's been out in the rain!"

When the noon whistles blew for the first

time in weeks there was nothing to do but turn the key in the office door and go home. As she was walking up the hill one of the Ward cars drew up to the curb just in front of her and Williamson waved a beckoning hand.

"I'll take you up," he called out. "Come along!"

"What do you make of it?" she asked him, as the car purred onward.

"Blest if I know," said he. "Hiram is not only sane, but hustling. Arrived at the mill about the time I did—had been seeing to the distribution of that five thousand, or something. And I wish you could have seen how he made things jump—Harrison, me, everybody. Hiram's not only Hiram's own sweet self, but a concentrated Hiram of a Hiram!"

Kate laughed merrily. "Well, the strike's over, anyway!" she cried.

"Ha!" said Williamson. "So it is! But allow me to call to your attention, sweet Katharina, that you and your pickets and your strikers' meetings and so on did *not* end it!"

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"Hiram's an old fox—he's sly. There's something back of it that we don't understand. That's what I mean."

"O-oh!" said Kate; and looked unusually thoughtful all the way up the hill.

Williamson stayed in the car to take it to the garage. The door was opened for Kate before she reached the vestibule.

"If you please, Miss, I've been tryin' to telephone you, Miss, but Central said as how the h'office was closed. I——"

"What's the matter? Isn't Mrs. Wendell——"

"It's Miss Wethersbee, Miss! She——"

Scott was evidently finding it hard to go on with his tale, whatever it was.

"Well?"

"If you please, Miss," he said, "Mrs. Scott has fell into the way, so to speak, of stopping by in the mornings to see if there mayn't be something she can do for Miss Wethersbee, she having had experience as lady's maid with her grace, the Duchess of Bueford, Miss, and knowing as how young ladies——"

"Well?" Kate interrupted sharply.

Scott bowed. "Yes, Miss. Mrs. Scott stopped by as usual this morning, Miss, and made so bold as to make a cup of chocolate with her own hands, and take it up to Miss Wethersbee's room, her grace, the Duchess of Bueford, having always——"

"Oh, for Heaven's sake, Scott——"

"Quite so, Miss! And when Mrs. Scott knocked on the door, and not getting an answer, so to speak, went in to raise the blinds, Miss, there was nobody there, Miss, excepting this on the pincushion. 'K you!"

"This" was a folded note stuck on a hat-pin, which he held out to Kate, as he spoke, on his little silver tray, and which called forth his final "Thank you" as she took it.

"What on earth . . ." she began, but Scott drew himself up.

"H'impossible to say, Miss, since the note is addressed to you. But it's quite notorious, so to speak, that when a note is on the pincushion——"

Kate drew out the hatpin and threw it down,

opened the note, read at a glance, and with an exclamation dashed upstairs in the direction of Carey's room. A minute or two later she appeared again, just as Ward and Williamson were coming into the hall.

Mr. Ward smiled up at her, nodded, and went into his favourite room. What was he expecting to find there? Williamson, grinning, tapped his forehead significantly and nodded toward Hiram's back; they both followed into the library.

"Ah, Kate!" said Hiram, as they entered. He was looking happy, expectant—somehow curiously younger, too. "Where's—ah—Miss Wethersbee? I rather thought she'd be here."

Scott noiselessly closed the library door. Kate was standing beside the writing-table in the center of the room, and Williamson proceeded to help himself to a cigarette. When she did not reply to Ward's question, something in her silence or her manner drew the looks of both men.

"Why, Kate! Aren't you well? What's

wrong?" Mr. Ward asked, with unusual solicitude.

They saw that she was remarkably pale, that she was holding something at her side, that she was biting her lower lip.

"Oh, Hiram," she said, and they saw tears come into her eyes. Both men now looked thoroughly alarmed.

"My dear girl!" Ward began. But once more she said, in that tone so curiously composed of pity and reluctance and—was it grief?—"Oh, Hiram! Read this!"

She handed him the piece of paper she had been holding. He unfolded it; and as he read his face became gray and haggard. He turned away from the two who were watching him, grasped the mantel as if he needed its support, stood there with bent head . . .

"*Will* you tell me what's the matter?" Williamson cried, throwing away his cigarette and coming close to Kate.

"She's gone," said Kate. "Carey's gone."

"Gone? Gone where? What do you mean?"

"It's true. She left that note for me. She's gone back to Virginia—back to Millwood, wherever that is! Oh, Carey!"

Kate sat down in the chair at the writing-table, threw her arms across the blotter, and frankly sobbed.

Williamson stared at her bowed head for a moment. Then he crossed the room to Hiram's side.

"Let me see that note," he demanded, holding out his hand. Mr. Ward did not move, and Williamson repeated, "I say, let me have that note!"

Mr. Ward raised his head and took his hands from the mantel. He returned Williamson's look with another as steady, then slowly took out his pocketbook, laid the note inside of it, and returned it to the inside pocket of his coat.

Williamson's face grew red. "You've no right to that," he said. "I tell you, let me see that note! It was not written to you!"

"No," said Hiram, rather ambiguously.

"It was not written to you. It's not yours. Let me have it!"

"No," Hiram said again.

There was a silent struggle of looks. Then Williamson said, "Mr. Ward, I hereby resign from your employ—now, right now. That note was written by the woman I love, and I demand its return to me or to the person it was addressed to."

Hiram looked at him for a moment, then walked the length of the room and back. He laid his hand on the younger man's shoulder.

"Bob," he said, "I guess you need about a month's vacation. You might spend it cruising about the country in my Packard. And—they say the climate of Virginia is excellent, and the scenery admirable. When will you start?"

It took only a moment for Williamson to understand. He held out his hand. "Hiram! Old Hiram! D'you mean it?"

Kate looked up, watching them breathlessly.

"They say the roads in the western parts are not as good as they might be, but I guess the Packard can negotiate them," said Hiram.

Williamson wrung his hand and left the

room hastily. Mr. Ward stood looking after him.

Kate rose and leaned across the table toward him. "Oh, Hiram!" she said. "Hiram! Hiram! And what are *you* going to do?"

"We-e-ell," he said slowly, "I rather imagine I shall have business in Virginia, too."

WHAT is there of promise, gentle Reader, in a house set on a hill? What is there of foreboding in a pine-arched driveway? What is there of regret and sadness in an old garden? What is there, patient Reader, in the tenantless shell of an old home that spells Romance? Can it be the ghost of old loves, the echo of old songs, the scent of flowers long fallen to dust? Is it the allurement of things gone past recall, or the sad reminder that all which lives must come at last to silence—that impregnable barrier between *then* and *now*? None will deny that Romance lives and beckons all of us. Breathe in the fragrance of that old potpourri—would you not wish the rose a-bloom again? Brush up those crisp brown leaves with your feet, as you walk through the winter woods—do you not think of past summers when those leaves were green? Touch this bit of old brocade—do you see the bride who wore it? Look into that dim old mirror—do you see reflected there the faces of belles and beaux, of matrons and babes and sturdy gentlemen, who must have passed before it? Or walk in the pale, calm radiance of moonlight; lift your face to that breeze-caught sweetness of jasmine or honeysuckle or white lilies; listen to the air of that gavotte—ah, Reader, only put out your hand, and you will touch it! Only turn your head, and you will see it near you! Only smile, and it will walk beside you! It is ever here, always with us, a bright shadow of things that were and are to be! It lingers in the old, is new-born in the new. You will find it in the joy of life, the strength of battle, the message of eye to eye. And in the lover's touch—oh, surely you will find it there! For it is eternal youth—Romance!

TOWARD the far southern border of an old State there is a house set on a hill. Its upper windows look out on a long, distant valley, where spring comes early with its nesting birds and gleams of dog-wood, where summer lingers, reluctantly to depart only when autumn has set flaunting banners of scarlet on every hilltop, spread a regal carpet through every valley, and scattered a kingly largesse of gold over every field.

There is a road through the valley, weed-grown where it was once well travelled by carriages bound to and from that old house on the hill. Now the house is unsought, forgotten. Those who danced there have long passed on, with those who built, and toiled, and played, who loved and fought and—died. The house remains but an empty shell of its former self, here and there a window broken, a shutter hanging, a chimney ragged, a bit of carved railing gone; and inside, that curious atmosphere which fills a house where many voices

were once heard, many presences made themselves felt, and where but one or two remain—an atmosphere of the mind as well as of the senses, all-pervading, saddening. But out of the long ago, with each recurring spring, stray symbols from its old garden, a legacy of hands long still, come daffodils, and pale poet-flowers, lilacs, and white and pink and red of other shrubs, crowding up to the very threshold of the house, caressing its old sides, peeping in at the windows, nestling close to the stone steps, here and there lapping over the grass-grown paths.

Out of the long ago, too, came the spirit of a girl who sat on the lowest of the stone steps, on an April morning. With her youth, her beauty, her sweet wistfulness, she might have been an image of spring herself, pictured against the background of that old, decaying house; her lap was full of blossoms, and three or four small puppies were crawling about on the border of her skirt or tumbling in the grass at her feet.

Driven by restlessness, she had wandered far

that morning, watching the nest-building birds in the old garden, seeking forget-me-nots down by the brook, finding again that favourite secret place on a sunny bank where spring spread a carpet of scented violets, now and again stepping aside lest she crush a grape hyacinth in the grass—little towers of blue or white pearls. Burgeoning life was everywhere that morning; even in the old house a negro voice was singing, as if there, too, this well-spring of joy must burst forth. Yet in her wandering, it seemed, the girl had not found her share of joy. Listlessly she had come back to the sun-warmed steps, glad of the companionship of the little dogs. She gathered them up to her lap, where they rolled helplessly about until they got their bearings, then tumbled down again to their romp in the grass. The mother dog watched their descent, or desertion; then she came closer and rested her head on the girl's knee, to look up at her with adoring, beseeching eyes. Carey patted the soft brown and white, spoke the dog's name, was curiously comforted.

Comforted? Was she in need, then, of comfort? This was home, her own Millwood, to which she had fled as to a refuge. It was nearly a month now since the evening when she had seen herself as with the eyes of Mrs. Boyne and the rest of Hilton; nearly a month since the dawn when she had crept out of Mr. Ward's house, to hide herself and her shame of what she believed he must think her. Until Mrs. Boyne made it plain to her, she had not dreamed that any one could think the dreadful thing Mrs. Boyne had hinted; but there is no hotter flame than the blush of innocence: because she had been in ignorance so long, because she had offended so unwittingly against a code she had not known, her dismay was all the more keen. The crowning ignominy was her memory of the last hour with Mr. Ward. He might so easily read into that scene all that Mrs. Boyne had taunted her with! In all probability he had done so, for had he not left her, in his kindness. rather than— Oh, how the memory of it hurt, how it humiliated her! How, through the long,

long hours of that night, had she not fought with her shame and horror of the thing he must have believed her to be, only to find, with the dawn, that she could not face him again!

It had been easy enough, that flight of hers. A few gold pieces remained—the prettiest ones. She had learned much since the day when her method of buying a ticket had been to lay her all on the shelf in front of the ticket-seller.

She had learned enough to know that Williamson, if not also Mr. Ward and dear Kate, would go at once to the station in search of her; so she bought her ticket first to New York, and at New York to Washington. That was the effective means of her escaping their pursuit, as she had foreseen. This time she had not been conspicuous, as she was on the earlier journey; she was not once made conscious of curious eyes. Instead, she brought back to Millwood only a dim memory of hours spent on the rumbling train, with a dull pain encompassing her; and ever since, even through the

welcoming jubilations of the darkeys, the pain had remained.

Sometimes a girl passes into womanhood in a moment; but it was not so with Carey. Not Williamson's ardour, not Mr. Ward's last look, not her shame, not all the knowledge that had come to her in the past months, changed her from the child-woman to the woman full-grown. Rather, it was a gradual adjusting of all. Williamson's love-making had frightened her and left her quite unmoved. The wonders she had seen had impressed her for the moment, and taken their places—as with all of us—as part of the scheme of life, no more to be marveled at than the food that is put before us. Kate's kindness was sweet to remember—a woman's friendship had been one of the things she had unconsciously missed all her life. Mr. Ward—ah!—what he thought of her, what he must be thinking of her—how that idea burned like hot coals of miserable consciousness through everything she did, through all the hours—and how it must continue to sear the hours to come! It was by her

suffering that girlhood passed; and it was as womanhood emerged that the readjustment came. Carey the woman understood Mrs. Boyne's falseness as Carey the girl had not; the new Carey recognised, too, the truth and significance of Mr. Ward's last look as her younger self had not—could not. Fuller understanding emerged with that indefinable change to maturity, until at last she had only to contend with loneliness, and longing, and regret at her own precipitancy.

Yet not once had she thought of returning. Her second flight—so she believed—had forever closed the door of that other life. It seemed to her, back here at Millwood, that the months in Hilton had encompassed all of life. Life was over. There were still days to be gone through when she must do the best she could to breathe and eat and sleep and—forget! She had lived; and she had been telling herself these last days that it should be enough. She had known—what she had known; that ought to satisfy her. Yet so unreal was her satisfaction that she could wander through the

big, shabby rooms of the old house, seek out all her beloved corners on the plantation, gather the spring blossoms, loiter in sunshine or cool shadow with a favourite book and the dogs—and still ache with sadness and longing.

It had been so to-day. She had found her bank of sweet violets, gathered her bluets, wandered through the poor old overgrown garden to note the day's growth since yesterday; and after all, it was only another day, another weary, pointless day.

Still the negro voice was singing in the back part of the house; still the gentle dog pressed its head against her knee; still the hour dragged. . . . She lifted her face to watch the flight of a bird toward the box-hedge of the garden; its nest was there . . . her eyes stung; was it from the light or because tears were near? She bent down, rested her cheek on the dog's head. . . .

A sound came up to her from the woods below, fitfully at first, then more clearly—a sound as of the purring of some monstrous

animal or the beat of a gigantic pulse. As it drew nearer a scantily clad little darkey ran in through what had once been the gateway of the place, tore across the open space in front of the house with arms and legs flying and an expression as if the evil one himself were pursuing. In another moment a large, dark shape had glided between the ruined gate-posts, the pulsing sound increased. . . .

"Can you tell me," a voice began, then stopped.

"By the Lord Harry!" cried Williamson, and sprang out of the car to come with great strides toward the figure on the steps. She stood up, flowers and puppies tumbling together from her lap.

"Carey! Carey! Carey!" he said over and over, as if the mere saying of her name were enough to express everything.

She held out both hands and laughed a little. He kept saying "Carey, Carey, Carey" until its foolishness seemed to occur to him, or perhaps until the touch of her hands in his steadied him. Then he asked,

"Carey, why did you run away? *Why* did you run away?"

She shook her head and tried to withdraw her hands.

"Were we so cruel to you? Did we disappoint you so? Carey, did I—did *I* have anything to do with it? Did you run away from *me?*"

Now she looked at him. "You?" she repeated, as if in amazement.

"Was it because I frightened you? Did you run away because I told you—that afternoon——"

"I had forgotten that," she whispered. Then when she saw in his face that he understood what her forgetting signified, she cried, "Oh, Bob! Dear Bob!"

"You didn't mean that!" he said, bending closer to her. "You *couldn't* mean you had forgotten that I love you!"

"No, no! I didn't mean it!"

The very kindness of her quick denial convinced him of its truth as nothing else could have. He bent down and pressed her hands

to his face. Presently he dropped them and stood up.

"All right, my dear!" he said, and tried to smile at her. "It's all right. I understand."

"Ah, Bob! I don't want to hurt you! I do love you!"

He laughed ruefully. "Yes. Yes, you 'do love' me, Carey! Never mind, dear—don't let it grieve that tender heart of yours. I wouldn't have it hurt you for one moment."

He looked about him, at the poor old shell of a house, at the overgrown garden, the wide space that had been a lawn and was now dotted with bluets and patches of daffodils. She could think of nothing to say to him, of no way of telling how glad she was to see him—because she knew how little that could satisfy him.

Presently he drew a deep breath. "Well," he said, "I must go!"

That stirred her to something of her old self. "Oh! Oh, how rude I've been! What *would* Aunt Crishy say! Why, Bob dear, nobody could come to Millwood and not be—entertained! Oh! You must stay——"

"Dear little girl!" he said, his voice trem-

bling somewhat. "Dear little girl! I'm not going to stay now! I have something else to do first—something more important!"

"Why, Bob!"

"Don't look so horrified! It's quite true! My dear, how do you suppose I found you?"

She shook her head wonderingly.

"It's more than three weeks since you ran away from us, isn't it? Well, every day since then Hiram and I have been driving over the roads of Virginia searching everywhere for Millwood, for you. It was only by chance that I happened to see the name of that legal friend of yours, Mr. Mink, on a sign in the court-house square, down there in the town, this morning. Once heard, that name is never forgotten. I saw it—I stopped. He was none too willing to direct me, but I managed to get enough out of him to set me on the right road. I wired Hiram—I hope he has gotten the message already, for we have tried to keep in touch with each other, and as far as I know he's over in the next county to-day. Then I—came!" He made her a bow of mock ceremony.

"Now you surely know what it is I have to do, don't you?"

"Tell me," she said.

"Well, I guess Hiram will tell you, when he comes!"

She flushed rosy red. "I think—perhaps—if he just knows—I am safe, he—will not—want to come!"

Williamson tried to smile. "Well, I guess we'll give old Hiram a chance to decide that for himself," he began. "That's what he likes——"

But suddenly Carey sat down on the steps and hid her face on her knees. "Oh!" she cried, "You don't believe it, Bob! You don't think he believes it, do you? Nor Kate? He doesn't think I am—what she said, does he?"

"She said? Kate? What on earth are you trying to say, Carey?"

He sat down beside her, tried to soothe her. "My dear, tell me!"

So it all came out—how Mrs. Boyne had accused her of unspeakable things, how understanding came to her in one dreadful moment—and shame, lest he and Kate and Mr. Ward

should have believed that of her, too; how she realised what she had done, innocent though it had been, in journeying alone, at night, to the house of strangers, uninvited; how she felt herself out of place, a waif, and ashamed, *ashamed!* How she had not dared to face them with her new knowledge and her shame; how she had written the little note to Kate and taken her gold coins and stolen out of the house. . . .

He heard the tale all through, helped her by questions, encouraged her by denials and reassurances; then, when it was all told, he rose again.

"So!" he said. "The Widow Boyne! That was it!"

"Oh, do you think he does believe——"

"No! No, my dear, I don't think he does believe! I most certainly don't think he does! And now—I have something to do, haven't I? Good-by, my dear. Oh—Carey!"

It was twilight when Mr. Ward found his way to the old house on the hill and drove his car between the ruined gate-posts. The daffodils in the grass looked pale in the fading

light; the little dogs and the birds had gone to sleep, but there was one who was not sleeping. She was standing in the doorway, like a sweet white ghost of long ago; but when he stepped down from the motor, took off his cap, and looked up at her, she moved forward to meet him.

"Carey!" he said, in a low tone she had never heard before. "Carey!"

Through the dusk he saw the hands pressed over her heart, the black hair, the eyes of that clear, deep blue. . . .

"Carey!"

She wavered a little, seemed scarcely to advance . . . yet in a moment she knew the comfort of his arms. . . .

"My darling!" he said, when they were sitting side by side, hand in hand, on the crumbling steps where so many other lovers had sat in the old days. "My darling, I have nothing in the world to offer you for your gift of your sweet self."

It was dusk, and the spring of the year, and his love was beside him; he had forgotten his treasures, his millions, his power.

She raised one of his hands to her cheek, and it was not so dark but that he could see the smile in her eyes.

"I am old, every minute of thirty-six, and the homeliest poor devil that ever lived. And—" he looked over his shoulder toward the dark old house—"I don't want the shades of your ancestors to hear, but my grandfather carried a dinner-pail! I'm inclined to believe that my father did also!"

He paused for her reply; it was not all a joke with him.

"A gentleman," she said slowly, softly, as if she were repeating a lesson learned by rote, "is always kind, and gentle, and generous. A gentleman is always quick to right a wrong. He is ready and willing to help a lady—a woman, all women. You need never be afraid of anything, not of anything at all——"

"My dear, my dear!" he cried, drawing her close to him.

Presently she said, "Bob asked me why I ran away! Don't *you* want to know why I ran away?"

"No," he said. "I only want to know that

you are here." Then he added, "But we can't be here always. I've got to take you back to the world, the same world that disappointed you so."

"You will not be taking me back," she said. "It is here. I tried to run away from it, but I only brought it with me! But," she added, resting her cheek on his shoulder, "I am not afraid of it. Do you know—" she spoke musingly, "it has come to me, in these days here alone, that—if one only loves enough——"

"Yes," he said to her pause, drawing her closer, "I understand. If one only loves enough the world is right—and the best place there is. . . ."

It was true; he understood, and more than she had expressed. It was made plain to him that she was still the sweet child-woman, the survival of a simpler day, yet also had become, in her hours alone, the woman who would walk beside him through the world loving enough—loving enough to make it a sweet place, and wherever she was a safe and noble place, the best place. . . .

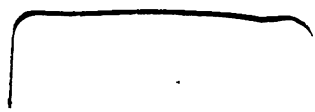
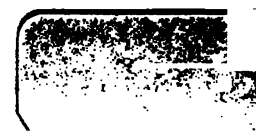
The shadows fell around them, and the

silence. Their thoughts drifted out to the world—to the stars also, and the place of dreams. . . . A soft breeze sprang up and brought a breath of fragrance. It was spring, and the year's life was beginning. . . . A plaintive note sounded from the box-hedge; a nesting bird had awakened, and her mate had spoken, reassuringly, that he was near. . . .

"Oh!" she murmured, sitting up very straight, drawing away from him a little, looking at him accusingly, "Oh! you never, never, never have told me what they called you when you were a little baby!"

He laughed aloud. "They called me Hiram!" he declared. "That's what they called me—Hiram! It's a very good name! There's nothing the matter with it, is there?"

"Oh, but I want to call you something else! Please!" she coaxed. "Please tell me! *What* does that great big capital A stand for?"

His child-woman was not altogether gone! He turned her face up toward his own. "I'll have it engraved in full inside your wedding ring!" he promised.

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